

CHRISTIAN RELIGION

ROBERT GREEN INGERSOLL

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THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

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BY
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THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

I.

BY ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

In the presence of eternity the mountains are as transient as the clouds.

A PROFOUND change has taken place in the world of thought. The pews are trying to set themselves somewhat above the pulpit. The layman discusses theology with the minister, and smiles. Christians excuse themselves for belonging to the church, by denying a part of the creed. The idea is abroad that they who know the most of nature believe the least about theology. The sciences are regarded as infidels, and facts as scoffers. Thousands of most excellent people avoid churches, and, with few exceptions, only those attend prayer-meetings who wish to be alone. The pulpit is losing because the people are growing.

Of course it is still claimed that we are a Christian people, indebted to something called Christianity for all the progress we have made. There is still a vast difference of opinion as to what Christianity really is, although many warring sects have been discussing that question, with fire and sword, through centuries of creed and crime. Every new sect has been denounced at its birth as illegitimate, as a something born out of orthodox wedlock, and that should have been allowed to perish on the steps

where it was found. Of the relative merits of the various denominations, it is sufficient to say that each claims to be right. Among the evangelical churches there is a substantial agreement upon what they consider the fundamental truths of the gospel. These fundamental truths, as I understand them, are :

That there is a personal God, the creator of the material universe; that he made man of the dust, and woman from part of the man; that the man and woman were tempted by the devil; that they were turned out of the garden of Eden; that, about fifteen hundred years afterward, God's patience having been exhausted by the wickedness of mankind, he drowned his children with the exception of eight persons; that afterward he selected from their descendants Abraham, and through him the Jewish people; that he gave laws to these people, and tried to govern them in all things; that he made known his will in many ways; that he wrought a vast number of miracles; that he inspired men to write the Bible; that, in the fullness of time, it having been found impossible to reform mankind, this God came upon earth as a child born of the Virgin Mary; that he lived in Palestine; that he preached for about three years, going from place to place, occasionally raising the dead, curing the blind and the halt; that he was crucified—for the crime of blasphemy, as the Jews supposed, but that, as a matter of fact, he was offered as a sacrifice for the sins of all who might have faith in him; that he was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven, where he now is, making intercession for his followers; that he will forgive the sins of all who believe on him, and that those who do not believe will be consigned to the dungeons of eternal pain. These—it may be with the addition of the sacraments of Baptism and the Last Supper—constitute what is generally known as the Christian religion.

It is most cheerfully admitted that a vast number of people not only believe these things, but hold them in exceeding reverence, and imagine them to be of the utmost importance to mankind. They regard the Bible as the only light that God has given for the guidance of his children; that it is the one star in nature's sky—the foundation of all morality, of all law, of all order, and of all individual and national progress. They regard it as the only means we have for ascertaining the will of God, the origin of man, and the destiny of the soul.

It is needless to inquire into the causes that have led so many people to believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures. In my

opinion, they were and are mistaken, and the mistake has hindered, in countless ways, the civilization of man. The Bible has been the fortress and defense of nearly every crime. No civilized country could reenact its laws, and in many respects its moral code is abhorrent to every good and tender man. It is admitted that many of its precepts are pure, that many of its laws are wise and just, and that many of its statements are absolutely true.

Without desiring to hurt the feelings of anybody, I propose to give a few reasons for thinking that a few passages, at least, in the Old Testament are the product of a barbarous people.

In all civilized countries it is not only admitted, but it is passionately asserted, that slavery is and always was a hideous crime; that a war of conquest is simply murder; that polygamy is the enslavement of woman, the degradation of man, and the destruction of home; that nothing is more infamous than the slaughter of decrepit men, of helpless women, and of prattling babes; that captured maidens should not be given to soldiers; that wives should not be stoned to death on account of their religious opinions, and that the death penalty ought not to be inflicted for a violation of the Sabbath. We know that there was a time, in the history of almost every nation, when slavery, polygamy, and wars of extermination were regarded as divine institutions; when women were looked upon as beasts of burden, and when, among some people, it was considered the duty of the husband to murder the wife for differing with him on the subject of religion. Nations that entertain these views to-day are regarded as savage, and, probably, with the exception of the South Sea islanders, the Feejees, some citizens of Delaware, and a few tribes in Central Africa, no human beings can be found degraded enough to agree upon these subjects with the Jehovah of the ancient Jews. The only evidence we have, or can have, that a nation has ceased to be savage is the fact that it has abandoned these doctrines. To every one, except the theologian, it is perfectly easy to account for the mistakes, atrocities, and crimes of the past, by saying that civilization is a slow and painful growth; that the moral perceptions are cultivated through ages of tyranny, of want, of crime, and of heroism; that it requires centuries for man to put out the eyes of self and hold in lofty and in equal poise the scales of justice; that conscience is born of suffering; that mercy is the child of the imagination—of the power to put oneself in the sufferer's place, and that man advances only as he becomes acquainted with

his surroundings, with the mutual obligations of life, and learns to take advantage of the forces of nature.

But the believer in the inspiration of the Bible is compelled to declare that there was a time when slavery was right—when men could buy, and women could sell, their babes. He is compelled to insist that there was a time when polygamy was the highest form of virtue; when wars of extermination were waged with the sword of mercy; when religious toleration was a crime, and when death was the just penalty for having expressed an honest thought. He must maintain that Jehovah is just as bad now as he was four thousand years ago, or that he was just as good then as he is now, but that human conditions have so changed that slavery, polygamy, religious persecutions, and wars of conquest are now perfectly devilish. Once they were right—once they were commanded by God himself; now, they are prohibited. There has been such a change in the conditions of man that, at the present time, the devil is in favor of slavery, polygamy, religious persecution, and wars of conquest. That is to say, the devil entertains the same opinion to-day that Jehovah held four thousand years ago, but in the meantime Jehovah has remained exactly the same—changeless and incapable of change.

We find that other nations beside the Jews had similar laws and ideas; that they believed in and practiced slavery and polygamy, murdered women and children, and exterminated their neighbors to the extent of their power. It is not claimed that they received a revelation. It is admitted that they had no knowledge of the true God. And yet, by a strange coincidence, they practiced the same crimes, of their own motion, that the Jews did by the command of Jehovah. From this it would seem that man can do wrong without a special revelation.

It will hardly be claimed, at this day, that the passages in the Bible upholding slavery, polygamy, war, and religious persecution are evidences of the inspiration of that book. Suppose that there had been nothing in the Old Testament upholding these crimes, would any modern Christian suspect that it was not inspired, on account of the omission? Suppose that there had been nothing in the Old Testament but laws in favor of these crimes, would any intelligent Christian now contend that it was the work of the true God? If the devil had inspired a book, will some believer in the doctrine of inspiration tell us in what respect, on the subjects of slavery, polygamy, war, and

liberty, it would have differed from some parts of the Old Testament? Suppose that we should now discover a Hindu book of equal antiquity with the Old Testament, containing a defense of slavery, polygamy, wars of extermination, and religious persecution, would we regard it as evidence that the writers were inspired by an infinitely wise and merciful God? As most other nations at that time practiced these crimes, and as the Jews would have practiced them all, even if left to themselves, one can hardly see the necessity of any inspired commands upon these subjects. Is there a believer in the Bible who does not wish that God, amid the thunders and lightnings of Sinai, had distinctly said to Moses that man should not own his fellow-man; that women should not sell their babes; that men should be allowed to think and investigate for themselves, and that the sword should never be unsheathed to shed the blood of honest men? Is there a believer, in the world, who would not be delighted to find that every one of these infamous passages are interpolations, and that the skirts of God were never reddened by the blood of maiden, wife, or babe? Is there a believer who does not regret that God commanded a husband to stone his wife to death for suggesting the worship of the sun or moon? Surely, the light of experience is enough to tell us that slavery is wrong, that polygamy is infamous, and that murder is not a virtue. No one will now contend that it was worth God's while to impart the information to Moses, or to Joshua, or to anybody else, that the Jewish people might purchase slaves of the heathen, or that it was their duty to exterminate the natives of the Holy Land. The deists have contended that the Old Testament is too cruel and barbarous to be the work of a wise and loving God. To this, the theologians have replied, that nature is just as cruel; that the earthquake, the volcano, the pestilence and storm, are just as savage as the Jewish God; and to my mind this is a perfect answer.

Suppose that we knew that after "inspired" men had finished the Bible, the devil got possession of it, and wrote a few passages; what part of the sacred Scriptures would Christians now pick out as being probably his work? Which of the following passages would naturally be selected as having been written by the devil—"Love thy neighbor as thyself," or, "Kill all the males among the little ones, and kill every woman; but all the women children keep alive for yourselves"?

It may be that the best way to illustrate what I have said of the Old Testament is to compare some of the supposed teachings of Jehovah with those of persons who never read an "inspired" line, and who lived and died without having received the light of revelation. Nothing can be more suggestive than a comparison of the ideas of Jehovah—the inspired words of the one claimed to be the infinite God, as recorded in the Bible—with those that have been expressed by men who, all admit, received no help from heaven.

In all ages of which any record has been preserved, there have been those who gave their ideas of justice, charity, liberty, love, and law. Now, if the Bible is really the work of God, it should contain the grandest and sublimest truths. It should, in all respects, excel the works of man. Within that book should be found the best and loftiest definitions of justice; the truest conceptions of human liberty; the clearest outlines of duty; the tenderest, the highest, and the noblest thoughts,—not that the human mind has produced, but that the human mind is capable of receiving. Upon every page should be found the luminous evidence of its divine origin. Unless it contains grander and more wonderful things than man has written, we are not only justified in saying, but we are compelled to say, that it was written by no being superior to man. It may be said that it is unfair to call attention to certain bad things in the Bible, while the good are not so much as mentioned. To this it may be replied that a divine being would not put bad things in a book. Certainly a being of infinite intelligence, power, and goodness could never fall below the ideal of "depraved and barbarous" man. It will not do, after we find that the Bible upholds what we now call crimes, to say that it is not verbally inspired. If the words are not inspired, what is? It may be said that the thoughts are inspired. But this would include only the thoughts expressed without words. If ideas are inspired, they must be contained in and expressed only by inspired words; that is to say, the arrangement of the words, with relation to each other, must have been inspired. For the purpose of this perfect arrangement, the writers, according to the Christian world, were inspired. Were some sculptor inspired of God to make a statue perfect in its every part, we would not say that the marble was inspired, but the statue—the relation of part to part, the married harmony of form and function. The language, the words, take the place of the marble, and it is the arrangement of these words that Chris-

tians claim to be inspired. If there is one uninspired word,—that is, one word in the wrong place, or a word that ought not to be there,—to that extent the Bible is an uninspired book. The moment it is admitted that some words are not, in their arrangement as to other words, inspired, then, unless with absolute certainty these words can be pointed out, a doubt is cast on all the words the book contains. If it was worth God's while to make a revelation to man at all, it was certainly worth his while to see to it that it was correctly made. He would not have allowed the ideas and mistakes of pretended prophets and designing priests to become so mingled with the original text that it is impossible to tell where he ceased and where the priests and prophets began. Neither will it do to say that God adapted his revelation to the prejudices of mankind. Of course it was necessary for an infinite being to adapt his revelation to the intellectual capacity of man; but why should God confirm a barbarian in his prejudices? Why should he fortify a heathen in his crimes? If a revelation is of any importance whatever, it is to eradicate prejudices from the human mind. It should be a lever with which to raise the human race. Theologians have exhausted their ingenuity in finding excuses for God. It seems to me that they would be better employed in finding excuses for men. They tell us that the Jews were so cruel and ignorant that God was compelled to justify, or nearly to justify, many of their crimes, in order to have any influence with them whatever. They tell us that if he had declared slavery and polygamy to be criminal, the Jews would have refused to receive the ten commandments. They insist that, under the circumstances, God did the best he could; that his real intention was to lead them along slowly, step by step, so that, in a few hundred years, they would be induced to admit that it was hardly fair to steal a babe from its mother's breast. It has always seemed reasonable that an infinite God ought to have been able to make man grand enough to know, even without a special revelation, that it is not altogether right to steal the labor, or the wife, or the child, of another. When the whole question is thoroughly examined, the world will find that Jehovah had the prejudices, the hatreds, and superstitions of his day.

If there is anything of value, it is liberty. Liberty is the air of the soul, the sunshine of life. Without it the world is a prison and the universe an infinite dungeon.

If the Bible is really inspired, Jehovah commanded the Jewish people to buy the children of the strangers that sojourned among them, and ordered that the children thus bought should be an inheritance for the children of the Jews, and that they should be bondmen and bondwomen forever. Yet Epictetus, a man to whom no revelation was ever made, a man whose soul followed only the light of nature, and who had never heard of the Jewish God, was great enough to say: "Will you not remember that your servants are by nature your brothers, the children of God? In saying that you have bought them, you look down on the earth, and into the pit, on the wretched law of men long since dead, but you see not the laws of the gods."

We find that Jehovah, speaking to his chosen people, assured them that their bondmen and their bondmaids must be "of the heathen that were round about them." "Of them," said Jehovah, "shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids." And yet Cicero, a pagan, Cicero, who had never been enlightened by reading the Old Testament, had the moral grandeur to declare: "They who say that we should love our fellow-citizens, but not foreigners, destroy the universal brotherhood of mankind, with which benevolence and justice would perish forever."

If the Bible is inspired, Jehovah, God of all worlds, actually said: "And if a man smite his servant or his maid with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall be surely punished; notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished, for he is his money." And yet Zeno, founder of the Stoics, centuries before Christ was born, insisted that no man could be the owner of another, and that the title was bad, whether the slave had become so by conquest, or by purchase. Jehovah ordered a Jewish general to make war, and gave, among others, this command: "When the Lord thy God shall drive them before thee, thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them." And yet Epictetus, whom we have already quoted, gave this marvelous rule for the guidance of human conduct: "Live with thy inferiors as thou wouldst have thy superiors live with thee."

Is it possible, after all, that a being of infinite goodness and wisdom said: "I will heap mischief upon them; I will send mine arrows upon them; they shall be burned with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction. I will

send the tooth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling, also, with the man of gray hairs"; while Seneca, an uninspired Roman, said: "The wise man will not pardon any crime that ought to be punished, but he will accomplish, in a nobler way, all that is sought in pardoning. He will spare some and watch over some, because of their youth, and others on account of their ignorance. His clemency will not fall short of justice, but will fulfill it perfectly."

Can we believe that God ever said of any one: "Let his children be fatherless and his wife a widow; let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg; let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places; let the extortioner catch all that he hath and let the stranger spoil his labor; let there be none to extend mercy unto him, neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children." If he ever said these words, surely he had never heard this line, this strain of music, from the Hindu: "Sweet is the lute to those who have not heard the prattle of their own children."

Jehovah, "from the clouds and darkness of Sinai," said to the Jews: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. . . . Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them; for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." Contrast this with the words put by the Hindu in the mouth of Brahma: "I am the same to all mankind. They who honestly serve other gods, involuntarily worship me. I am he who partaketh of all worship, and I am the reward of all worshipers."

Compare these passages. The first, a dungeon where crawl the things begot of jealous slime; the other, great as the domed firmament inlaid with suns.

II.

WAIVING the contradictory statements in the various books of the New Testament; leaving out of the question the history of the manuscripts; saying nothing about the errors in translation and the interpolations made by the fathers; and admitting, for the time being, that the books were all written at the

times claimed, and by the persons whose names they bear, the questions of inspiration, probability, and absurdity still remain.

As a rule, where several persons testify to the same transaction, while agreeing in the main points, they will disagree upon many minor things, and such disagreement upon minor matters is generally considered as evidence that the witnesses have not agreed among themselves upon the story they should tell. These differences in statement we account for from the facts that all did not see alike, that all did not have the same opportunity for seeing, and that all had not equally good memories. But when we claim that the witnesses were inspired, we must admit that he who inspired them did know exactly what occurred, and consequently there should be no contradiction, even in the minutest detail. The accounts should be not only substantially, but they should be actually, the same. It is impossible to account for any differences, or any contradictions, except from the weaknesses of human nature, and these weaknesses cannot be predicated of divine wisdom. Why should there be more than one correct account of anything? Why were four gospels necessary? One inspired record of all that happened ought to be enough.

One great objection to the Old Testament is the cruelty said to have been commanded by God, but all the cruelties recounted in the Old Testament ceased with death. The vengeance of Jehovah stopped at the portal of the tomb. He never threatened to avenge himself upon the dead; and not one word, from the first mistake in Genesis to the last curse of Malachi, contains the slightest intimation that God will punish in another world. It was reserved for the New Testament to make known the frightful doctrine of eternal pain. It was the teacher of universal benevolence who rent the veil between time and eternity, and fixed the horrified gaze of man on the lurid gulfs of hell. Within the breast of non-resistance was coiled the worm that never dies.

One great objection to the New Testament is that it bases salvation upon belief. This, at least, is true of the Gospel according to John, and of many of the epistles. I admit that Matthew never heard of the atonement, and died utterly ignorant of the scheme of salvation. I also admit that Mark never dreamed that it was necessary for a man to be born again; that he knew nothing of the mysterious doctrine of regeneration, and that he never even suspected that it was necessary to believe anything. In the sixteenth chapter of Mark, we are told that "He that

believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned"; but this passage has been shown to be an interpolation, and, consequently, not a solitary word is found in the Gospel according to Mark upon the subject of salvation by faith. The same is also true of the Gospel of Luke. It says not one word as to the necessity of believing on Jesus Christ, not one word as to the atonement, not one word upon the scheme of salvation, and not the slightest hint that it is necessary to believe anything here in order to be happy hereafter.

And I here take occasion to say, that with most of the teachings of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke I most heartily agree. The miraculous parts must, of course, be thrown aside. I admit that the necessity of belief, the atonement, and the scheme of salvation are all set forth in the Gospel of John,—a gospel, in my opinion, not written until long after the others.

According to the prevailing Christian belief, the Christian religion rests upon the doctrine of the atonement. If this doctrine is without foundation, if it is repugnant to justice and mercy, the fabric falls. We are told that the first man committed a crime for which all his posterity are responsible,—in other words, that we are accountable, and can be justly punished for a sin we never in fact committed. This absurdity was the father of another, namely, that a man can be rewarded for a good action done by another. God, according to the modern theologians, made a law, with the penalty of eternal death for its infraction. All men, they say, have broken that law. In the economy of heaven, this law had to be vindicated. This could be done by damning the whole human race. Through what is known as the atonement, the salvation of a few was made possible. They insist that the law—whatever that is—demanded the extreme penalty, that justice called for its victims, and that even mercy ceased to plead. Under these circumstances, God, by allowing the innocent to suffer, satisfactorily settled with the law, and allowed a few of the guilty to escape. The law was satisfied with this arrangement. To carry out this scheme, God was born as a babe into this world. "He grew in stature and increased in knowledge." At the age of thirty-three, after having lived a life filled with kindness, charity, and nobility, after having practiced every virtue, he was sacrificed as an atonement for man. It is claimed that he actually took our place, and bore our sins and our guilt; that in this way the justice of God was satisfied, and that the

blood of Christ was an atonement, an expiation, for the sins of all who might believe on him.

Under the Mosaic dispensation, there was no remission of sin except through the shedding of blood. If a man committed certain sins, he must bring to the priest a lamb, a bullock, a goat, or a pair of turtle-doves. The priest would lay his hands upon the animal, and the sin of the man would be transferred. Then the animal would be killed in the place of the real sinner, and the blood thus shed and sprinkled upon the altar would be an atonement. In this way Jehovah was satisfied. The greater the crime, the greater the sacrifice—the more blood, the greater the atonement. There was always a certain ratio between the value of the animal and the enormity of the sin. The most minute directions were given about the killing of these animals, and about the sprinkling of their blood. Every priest became a butcher, and every sanctuary a slaughter-house. Nothing could be more utterly shocking to a refined and loving soul. Nothing could have been better calculated to harden the heart than this continual shedding of innocent blood. This terrible system is supposed to have culminated in the sacrifice of Christ. His blood took the place of all other. It is necessary to shed no more. The law at last is satisfied, satiated, surfeited. The idea that God wants blood is at the bottom of the atonement, and rests upon the most fearful savagery. How can sin be transferred from men to animals, and how can the shedding of the blood of animals atone for the sins of men?

The Church says that the sinner is in debt to God, and that the obligation is discharged by the Saviour. The best that can possibly be said of such a transaction is, that the debt is transferred, not paid. The truth is, that a sinner is in debt to the person he has injured. If a man injures his neighbor, it is not enough for him to get the forgiveness of God, but he must have the forgiveness of his neighbor. If a man puts his hand in the fire and God forgives him, his hand will smart exactly the same. You must, after all, reap what you sow. No god can give you wheat when you sow tares, and no devil can give you tares when you sow wheat.

There are in nature neither rewards nor punishments—there are consequences. The life of Christ is worth its example, its moral force, its heroism of benevolence.

To make innocence suffer is the greatest sin; how then is it possible to make the suffering of the innocent a justification for

the criminal? Why should a man be willing to let the innocent suffer for him? Does not the willingness show that he is utterly unworthy of the sacrifice? Certainly, no man would be fit for heaven who would consent that an innocent person should suffer for his sin. What would we think of a man who would allow another to die for a crime that he himself had committed? What would we think of a law that allowed the innocent to take the place of the guilty? Is it possible to vindicate a just law by inflicting punishment on the innocent? Would not that be a second violation instead of a vindication?

If there was no general atonement until the crucifixion of Christ, what became of the countless millions who died before that time? And it must be remembered that the blood shed by the Jews was not for other nations. Jehovah hated foreigners. The Gentiles were left without forgiveness. What has become of the millions who have died since, without having heard of the atonement? What becomes of those who have heard but have not believed? It seems to me that the doctrine of the atonement is absurd, unjust, and immoral. Can a law be satisfied by the execution of the wrong person? When a man commits a crime, the law demands his punishment, not that of a substitute; and there can be no law, human or divine, that can be satisfied by the punishment of a substitute. Can there be a law that demands that the guilty be rewarded? And yet, to reward the guilty is far nearer justice than to punish the innocent.

According to the orthodox theology, there would have been no heaven had no atonement been made. All the children of men would have been cast into hell forever. The old men bowed with grief, the smiling mothers, the sweet babes, the loving maidens, the brave, the tender, and the just, would have been given over to eternal pain. Man, it is claimed, can make no atonement for himself. If he commits one sin, and with that exception lives a life of perfect virtue, still that one sin would remain unexpiated, unatoned, and for that one sin he would be forever lost. To be saved by the goodness of another, to be a redeemed debtor forever, has in it something repugnant to manhood.

We must also remember that Jehovah took special charge of the Jewish people; and we have always been taught that he did so for the purpose of civilizing them. If he had succeeded in civilizing the Jews, he would have made the damnation of the

entire human race a certainty; because, if the Jews had been a civilized people when Christ appeared,—a people whose hearts had not been hardened by the laws and teachings of Jehovah,—they would not have crucified him, and, as a consequence, the world would have been lost. If the Jews had believed in religious freedom,—in the right of thought and speech,—not a human soul could ever have been saved. If, when Christ was on his way to Calvary, some brave, heroic soul had rescued him from the holy mob, he would not only have been eternally damned for his pains, but would have rendered impossible the salvation of any human being; and, except for the crucifixion of her son, the Virgin Mary, if the church is right, would be to-day among the lost.

In countless ways the Christian world has endeavored, for nearly two thousand years, to explain the atonement, and every effort has ended in an admission that it cannot be understood, and a declaration that it must be believed. Is it not immoral to teach that man can sin, that he can harden his heart and pollute his soul, and that, by repenting and believing something that he does not comprehend, he can avoid the consequences of his crimes? Has the promise and hope of forgiveness ever prevented the commission of a sin? Should men be taught that sin gives happiness here; that they ought to bear the evils of a virtuous life in this world for the sake of joy in the next; that they can repent between the last sin and the last breath; that after repentance every stain of the soul is washed away by the innocent blood of another; that the serpent of regret will not hiss in the ear of memory; that the saved will not even pity the victims of their own crimes; that the goodness of another can be transferred to them; and that sins forgiven cease to affect the unhappy wretches sinned against?

Another objection is that a certain belief is necessary to save the soul. It is often asserted that to believe is the only safe way. If you wish to be safe, be honest. Nothing can be safer than that. No matter what his belief may be, no man, even in the hour of death, can regret having been honest. It never can be necessary to throw away your reason to save your soul. A soul without reason is scarcely worth saving. There is no more degrading doctrine than that of mental non-resistance. The soul has a right to defend its castle—the brain, and he who waives that right becomes a serf and slave. Neither can I

admit that a man, by doing me an injury, can place me under obligation to do him a service. To render benefits for injuries is to ignore all distinctions between actions. He who treats his friends and enemies alike has neither love nor justice. The idea of non-resistance never occurred to a man with power to protect himself. This doctrine was the child of weakness, born when resistance was impossible. To allow a crime to be committed when you can prevent it, is next to committing the crime yourself. And yet, under the banner of non-resistance, the Church has shed the blood of millions, and in the folds of her sacred vestments have gleamed the daggers of assassination. With her cunning hands she wove the purple for hypocrisy, and placed the crown upon the brow of crime. For a thousand years larceny held the scales of justice, while beggars scorned the princely sons of toil, and ignorant fear denounced the liberty of thought.

If Christ was in fact God, he knew all the future. Before him, like a panorama, moved the history yet to be. He knew exactly how his words would be interpreted. He knew what crimes, what horrors, what infamies, would be committed in his name. He knew that the fires of persecution would climb around the limbs of countless martyrs. He knew that brave men would languish in dungeons, in darkness, filled with pain; that the Church would use instruments of torture, that his followers would appeal to whip and chain. He must have seen the horizon of the future red with the flames of the *auto da fé*. He knew all the creeds that would spring like poison fungi from every text. He saw the sects waging war against each other. He saw thousands of men, under the orders of priests, building dungeons for their fellow-men. He saw them using instruments of pain. He heard the groans, saw the faces white with agony, the tears, the blood—heard the shrieks and sobs of all the moaning, martyred multitudes. He knew that commentaries would be written on his words with swords, to be read by the light of fagots. He knew that the Inquisition would be born of teachings attributed to him. He saw all the interpolations and falsehoods that hypocrisy would write and tell. He knew that above these fields of death, these dungeons, these burnings, for a thousand years would float the dripping banner of the cross. He knew that in his name his followers would trade in human flesh, that cradles would be robbed, and women's breasts unbabed for gold, and yet he died with voiceless lips. Why did he fail to speak?

Why did he not tell his disciples, and through them the world, that man should not persecute, for opinion's sake, his fellow-man? Why did he not cry, You shall not persecute in my name; you shall not burn and torment those who differ from you in creed? Why did he not plainly say, I am the Son of God? Why did he not explain the doctrine of the trinity? Why did he not tell the manner of baptism that was pleasing to him? Why did he not say something positive, definite, and satisfactory about another world? Why did he not turn the tear-stained hope of heaven to the glad knowledge of another life? Why did he go dumbly to his death, leaving the world to misery and to doubt?

He came, they tell us, to make a revelation, and what did he reveal? "Love thy neighbor as thyself"? That was in the Old Testament. "Love God with all thy heart"? That was in the Old Testament. "Return good for evil"? That was said by Buddha seven hundred years before he was born. "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you"? This was the doctrine of Laotse. Did he come to give a rule of action? Zoroaster had done this long before: "Whenever thou art in doubt as to whether an action is good or bad, abstain from it." Did he come to teach us of another world? The immortality of the soul had been taught by Hindus, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans hundreds of years before he was born. Long before, the world had been told by Socrates that: "One who is injured ought not to return the injury, for on no account can it be right to do an injustice; and it is not right to return an injury, or to do evil to any man, however much we may have suffered from him." And Cicero had said: "Let us not listen to those who think that we ought to be angry with our enemies, and who believe this to be great and manly: nothing is more praiseworthy, nothing so clearly shows a great and noble soul, as clemency and readiness to forgive."

Is there anything nearer perfect than this from Confucius: "For benefits return benefits; for injuries return justice without any admixture of revenge"?

The dogma of eternal punishment rests upon passages in the New Testament. This infamous belief subverts every idea of justice. Around the angel of immortality the Church has coiled this serpent. A finite being can neither commit an infinite sin, nor a sin against the infinite. A being of infinite goodness and wisdom has no right, according to the human standard of justice,

to create any being destined to suffer eternal pain. A being of infinite wisdom would not create a failure, and surely a man destined to everlasting agony is not a success.

How long, according to the universal benevolence of the New Testament, can a man be reasonably punished in the next world for failing to believe something unreasonable in this? Can it be possible that any punishment can endure forever? Suppose that every flake of snow that ever fell was a figure nine, and that the first flake was multiplied by the second, and that product by the third, and so on to the last flake. And then suppose that this total should be multiplied by every drop of rain that ever fell, calling each drop a figure nine; and that total by each blade of grass that ever helped to weave a carpet for the earth, calling each blade a figure nine; and that again by every grain of sand on every shore, so that the grand total would make a line of nines so long that it would require millions upon millions of years for light, traveling at the rate of one hundred and eighty-five thousand miles per second, to reach the end. And suppose, further, that each unit in this almost infinite total stood for billions of ages—still that vast and almost endless time, measured by all the years beyond, is as one flake, one drop, one leaf, one blade, one grain, compared with all the flakes, and drops, and leaves, and blades, and grains.

Upon love's breast the Church has placed the eternal asp.

And yet, in the same book in which is taught this most infamous of doctrines, we are assured that "The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works."

III.

SO FAR as we know, man is the author of all books. If a book had been found on the earth by the first man, he might have regarded it as the work of God; but as men were here a good while before any books were found, and as man has produced a great many books, the probability is that the Bible is no exception.

Most nations, at the time the Old Testament was written, believed in slavery, polygamy, wars of extermination, and religious persecution; and it is not wonderful that the book contained nothing contrary to such belief. The fact that it was in exact accord with the morality of its time proves that it was not the

product of any being superior to man. "The inspired writers" upheld or established slavery, countenanced polygamy, commanded wars of extermination, and ordered the slaughter of women and babes. In these respects they were precisely like the uninspired savages by whom they were surrounded. They also taught and commanded religious persecution as a duty, and visited the most trivial offenses with the punishment of death. In these particulars they were in exact accord with their barbarian neighbors. They were utterly ignorant of geology and astronomy, and knew no more of what had happened than of what would happen; and, so far as accuracy is concerned, their history and prophecy were about equal; in other words, they were just as ignorant as those who lived and died in nature's night.

Does any Christian believe that if God were to write a book now, he would uphold the crimes commanded in the Old Testament? Has Jehovah improved? Has infinite mercy become more merciful? Has infinite wisdom intellectually advanced? Will any one claim that the passages upholding slavery have liberated mankind; that we are indebted for our modern homes to the texts that made polygamy a virtue; or that religious liberty found its soil, its light, and rain in the infamous verse wherein the husband is commanded to stone to death the wife for worshiping an unknown God?

The usual answer to these objections is that no country has ever been civilized without the Bible.

The Jews were the only people to whom Jehovah made his will directly known,—the only people who had the Old Testament. Other nations were utterly neglected by their Creator. Yet, such was the effect of the Old Testament on the Jews, that they crucified a kind, loving, and perfectly innocent man. They could not have done much worse without a Bible. In the crucifixion of Christ, they followed the teachings of his Father. If, as it is now alleged by the theologians, no nation can be civilized without a Bible, certainly God must have known the fact six thousand years ago, as well as the theologians know it now. Why did he not furnish every nation with a Bible?

As to the Old Testament, I insist that all the bad passages were written by men; that those passages were not inspired. I insist that a being of infinite goodness never commanded man to enslave his fellow-man, never told a mother to sell her babe, never established polygamy, never ordered one nation to extermi-

nate another, and never told a husband to kill his wife because she suggested the worshiping of some other God.

I also insist that the Old Testament would be a much better book with all of these passages left out; and, whatever may be said of the rest, the passages to which attention has been drawn can with vastly more propriety be attributed to a devil than to a god.

Take from the New Testament all passages upholding the idea that belief is necessary to salvation; that Christ was offered as an atonement for the sins of the world; that the punishment of the human soul will go on forever; that heaven is the reward of faith, and hell the penalty of honest investigation; take from it all miraculous stories,—and I admit that all the good passages are true. If they are true, it makes no difference whether they are inspired or not. Inspiration is only necessary to give authority to that which is repugnant to human reason. Only that which never happened needs to be substantiated by miracles. The universe is natural.

The Church must cease to insist that the passages upholding the institutions of savage men were inspired of God. The dogma of the atonement must be abandoned. Good deeds must take the place of faith. The savagery of eternal punishment must be renounced. Credulity is not a virtue, and investigation is not a crime. Miracles are the children of mendacity. Nothing can be more wonderful than the majestic, unbroken, sublime, and eternal procession of causes and effects.

Reason must be the final arbiter. "Inspired" books attested by miracles cannot stand against a demonstrated fact. A religion that does not command the respect of the greatest minds will, in a little while, excite the mockery of all. Every civilized man believes in the liberty of thought. Is it possible that God is intolerant? Is an act infamous in man one of the virtues of the Deity? Could there be progress in heaven without intellectual liberty? Is the freedom of the future to exist only in perdition? Is it not, after all, barely possible that a man acting like Christ can be saved? Is a man to be eternally rewarded for believing according to evidence, without evidence, or against evidence? Are we to be saved because we are good, or because another was virtuous? Is credulity to be winged and crowned, while honest doubt is chained and damned?

Do not misunderstand me. My position is that the cruel passages in the Old Testament are not inspired; that slavery,

polygamy, wars of extermination, and religious persecution always have been, are, and forever will be, abhorred and cursed by the honest, the virtuous, and the loving; that the innocent cannot justly suffer for the guilty, and that vicarious vice and vicarious virtue are equally absurd; that eternal punishment is eternal revenge; that only the natural can happen; that miracles prove the dishonesty of the few and the credulity of the many; and that, according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, salvation does not depend upon belief, nor the atonement, nor a "second birth," but that these gospels are in exact harmony with the declaration of the great Persian: "Taking the first footstep with the good thought, the second with the good word, and the third with the good deed, I entered paradise."

The dogmas of the past no longer reach the level of the highest thought, nor satisfy the hunger of the heart. While dusty faiths, embalmed and sepulchered in ancient texts, remain the same, the sympathies of men enlarge; the brain no longer kills its young; the happy lips give liberty to honest thoughts; the mental firmament expands and lifts; the broken clouds drift by; the hideous dreams, the foul, misshapen children of the monstrous night, dissolve and fade.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

II.

BY JEREMIAH S. BLACK.

“Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing, more than any man in all Venice: his reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff; you shall seek all day ere you find them; and when you have them, they are not worth the search.”—*Merchant of Venice*.

THE request to answer the foregoing paper comes to me, not in the form but with the effect of a challenge, which I cannot decline without seeming to acknowledge that the religion of the civilized world is an absurd superstition, propagated by impostors, professed by hypocrites, and believed only by credulous dupes.

But why should I, an unlearned and unauthorized layman, be placed in such a predicament? The explanation is easy enough. This is no business of the priests. Their prescribed duty is to preach the word, in the full assurance that it will commend itself to all good and honest hearts by its own manifest veracity and

the singular purity of its precepts. They cannot afford to turn away from their proper work, and leave willing hearers uninstructed, while they wrangle in vain with a predetermined opponent. They were warned to expect slander, indignity, and insult, and these are among the evils which they must not resist.

It will be seen that I am assuming no clerical function. I am not out on the forlorn hope of converting Mr. Ingersoll. I am no preacher exhorting a sinner to leave the seat of the scornful and come up to the bench of the penitents. My duty is more analogous to that of the policeman who would silence a rude disturber of the congregation, by telling him that his clamor is false and his conduct an offense against public decency.

Nor is the Church in any danger which calls for the special vigilance of its servants. Mr. Ingersoll thinks that the rock-founded faith of Christendom is giving way before his assaults, but he is grossly mistaken. The first sentence of his essay is a preposterous blunder. It is not true that "*a profound change* has taken place in the world of *thought*," unless a more rapid spread of the Gospel and a more faithful observance of its moral principles can be called so. Its truths are everywhere proclaimed with the power of sincere conviction, and accepted with devout reverence by uncounted multitudes of all classes. Solemn temples rise to its honor in the great cities; from every hill-top in the country you see the church-spire pointing toward heaven, and on Sunday all the paths that lead to it are crowded with worshipers. In nearly all families, parents teach their children that Christ is God, and his system of morality absolutely perfect. This belief lies so deep in the popular heart that, if every written record of it were destroyed to-day, the memory of millions could reproduce it to-morrow. Its earnestness is proved by its works. Wherever it goes it manifests itself in deeds of practical benevolence. It builds, not churches alone, but almshouses, hospitals, and asylums. It shelters the poor, feeds the hungry, visits the sick, consoles the afflicted, provides for the fatherless, comforts the heart of the widow, instructs the ignorant, reforms the vicious, and saves to the uttermost them that are ready to perish. To the common observer, it does not look as if Christianity was making itself ready to be swallowed up by Infidelity. Thus far, at least, the promise has been kept that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

There is, to be sure, a change in the party hostile to religion—not “a *profound* change,” but a change entirely superficial—which consists, not in *thought*, but merely in modes of expression and methods of attack. The bad classes of society always hated the doctrine and discipline which reproached their wickedness and frightened them by threats of punishment in another world. Aforetime they showed their contempt of divine authority only by their actions; but now, under new leadership, their enmity against God breaks out into articulate blasphemy. They assemble themselves together, they hear with passionate admiration the bold harangue which ridicules and defies the Maker of the universe; fiercely they rage against the Highest, and loudly they laugh, alike at the justice that condemns, and the mercy that offers to pardon them. The orator who relieves them by assurances of impunity, and tells them that no supreme authority has made any law to control them, is applauded to the echo and paid a high price for his congenial labor; he pockets their money, and flatters himself that he is a great power, profoundly moving “the world of thought.”

There is another totally false notion expressed in the opening paragraph, namely, that “they who know most of nature believe the least about theology.” The truth is exactly the other way. The more clearly one sees “the grand procession of causes and effects,” the more awful his reverence becomes for the author of the “sublime and unbroken” law which links them together. Not self-conceit and rebellious pride, but unspeakable humility, and a deep sense of the measureless distance between the Creator and the creature, fills the mind of him who looks with a rational spirit upon the works of the All-wise One. The heart of Newton repeats the solemn confession of David: “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?” At the same time, the lamentable fact must be admitted that “a little learning is a dangerous thing” to some persons. The sciolist with a mere smattering of physical knowledge is apt to mistake himself for a philosopher, and, swelling with his own importance, he gives out, like Simon Magus, “that himself is some great one.” His vanity becomes inflamed more and more, until he begins to think he knows all things. He takes every occasion to show his accomplishments by finding fault with the

works of creation and Providence; and this is an exercise in which he cannot long continue without learning to disbelieve in any Being greater than himself. It was to such a person, and not to the unpretending simpleton, that Solomon applied his often quoted aphorism: "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." These are what Paul refers to as "vain babblings and the opposition of science, falsely so called"; but they are perfectly powerless to stop or turn aside the great current of human thought on the subject of Christian theology. That majestic stream, supplied from a thousand unfailing fountains, rolls on and will roll forever.

Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis ævum.

Mr. Ingersoll is not, as some have estimated him, the most formidable enemy that Christianity has encountered since the time of Julian the Apostate. But he stands at the head of living infidels, "by merit raised to that bad eminence." His mental organization has the peculiar defects which fit him for such a place. He is all imagination and no discretion. He rises sometimes into a region of wild poetry, where he can color everything to suit himself. His motto well expresses the character of his argumentation—"mountains are as unstable as clouds": a fancy is as good as a fact, and a high-sounding period is rather better than a logical demonstration. His inordinate self-confidence makes him at once ferocious and fearless. He was a practical politician before he "took the stump" against Christianity, and at all times he has proved his capacity to "split the ears of the groundlings," and make the unskillful laugh. The article before us is the least objectionable of all his productions. Its style is higher, and better suited to the weight of the theme. Here the violence of his fierce invective is moderated; his scurrility gives place to an attempt at sophistry less shocking if not more true; and his coarse jokes are either excluded altogether, or else veiled in the decent obscurity of general terms. Such a paper from such a man, at a time like the present, is not wholly unworthy of a grave contradiction.

He makes certain charges which we answer by an explicit denial, and thus an issue is made, upon which, as a pleader would say, we "put ourselves upon the country." He avers that a certain "something called Christianity" is a false faith imposed on the world without evidence; that the facts it pretends to rest on are mere inventions; that its doctrines are pernicious; that

its requirements are unreasonable ; and that its sanctions are cruel. I deny all this, and assert, on the contrary, that its doctrines are divinely revealed ; its fundamental facts incontestably proved ; its morality perfectly free from all taint of error, and its influence most beneficent upon society in general, and upon all individuals who accept it and make it their rule of action.

How shall this be determined ? Not by what we call divine revelation, for that would be begging the question ; not by sentiment, taste, or temper, for these are as likely to be false as true ; but by inductive reasoning from evidence, of which the value is to be measured according to those rules of logic which enlightened and just men everywhere have adopted to guide them in the search for truth. We can appeal only to that rational love of justice, and that detestation of falsehood, which fair-minded persons of good intelligence bring to the consideration of other important subjects when it becomes their duty to decide upon them. In short, I want a decision upon sound judicial principles.

Gibson, the great Chief-Justice of Pennsylvania, once said to certain skeptical friends of his : " Give Christianity a common-law trial ; submit the evidence *pro* and *con* to an impartial jury under the direction of a competent court, and the verdict will assuredly be in its favor." This deliverance, coming from the most illustrious judge of his time, not at all given to expressions of sentimental piety, and quite incapable of speaking on any subject for mere effect, staggered the unbelief of those who heard it. I did not know him then, except by his great reputation for ability and integrity, but my thoughts were strongly influenced by his authority, and I learned to set a still higher value upon all his opinions when, in after life, I was honored with his close and intimate friendship.

Let Christianity have a trial on Mr. Ingersoll's indictment, and give us a decision *secundum allegata et probata*. I will confine myself strictly to the record ; that is to say, I will meet the accusations contained in this paper, and not those made elsewhere by him or others.

His first specification against Christianity is the belief of its disciples " that there is a personal God, the creator of the material universe." If God made the world it was a most stupendous miracle, and all miracles, according to Mr. Ingersoll's idea, are " the children of mendacity." To admit the one great miracle of creation would be an admission that other miracles are at least

probable, and that would ruin his whole case. But you cannot catch the leviathan of atheism with a hook. The universe, he says, is natural—it came into being of its own accord; it made its own laws at the start, and afterward improved itself considerably by spontaneous evolution. It would be a mere waste of time and space to enumerate the proofs which show that the universe was created by a preëxistent and self-conscious Being, of power and wisdom to us inconceivable. Conviction of the fact (miraculous though it be) forces itself on every one whose mental faculties are healthy and tolerably well balanced. The notion that all things owe their origin and their harmonious arrangement to the fortuitous concurrence of atoms is a kind of lunacy which very few men in these days are afflicted with. I hope I may safely assume it as certain that all, or nearly all, who read this page will have sense and reason enough to see for themselves that the plan of the universe could not have been designed without a Designer, or executed without a Maker.

But Mr. Ingersoll asserts that, at all events, this material world had not a good and beneficent creator; it is a bad, savage, cruel piece of work, with its pestilences, storms, earthquakes, and volcanoes; and man, with his liability to sickness, suffering, and death, is not a success, but, on the contrary, a failure. To defend the Creator of the world against an arraignment so foul as this would be almost as unbecoming as to make the accusation. We have neither jurisdiction nor capacity to rejudge the justice of God. Why man is made to fill this particular place in the scale of creation—a little lower than the angels, yet far above the brutes; not passionless and pure, like the former, nor mere machines, like the latter; able to stand, yet free to fall; knowing the right, and accountable for going wrong; gifted with reason, and impelled by self-love to exercise the faculty—these are questions on which we may have our speculative opinions, but knowledge is out of our reach. Meantime, we do not discredit our mental independence by taking it for granted that the Supreme Being has done all things well. Our ignorance of the whole scheme makes us poor critics upon the small part that comes within our limited perceptions. Seeming defects in the structure of the world may be its most perfect ornament—all apparent harshness the tenderest of mercies.

“All discord, harmony not understood,
All partial evil, universal good.”

But worse errors are imputed to God as moral ruler of the world than those charged against him as creator. He made man badly, but governed him worse; if the Jehovah of the Old Testament was not merely an imaginary being, then, according to Mr. Ingersoll, he was a prejudiced, barbarous, criminal tyrant. We will see what ground he lays, if any, for these outrageous assertions.

Mainly, principally, first and most important of all, is the unqualified assertion that the "moral code" which Jehovah gave to his people "is in many respects abhorrent to every good and tender man." Does Mr. Ingersoll know what he is talking about? The moral code of the Bible consists of certain immutable rules to govern the conduct of all men, at all times and all places, in their private and personal relations with one another. It is entirely separate and apart from the civil polity, the religious forms, the sanitary provisions, the police regulations, and the system of international law laid down for the special and exclusive observance of the Jewish people. This is a distinction which every intelligent man knows how to make. Has Mr. Ingersoll fallen into the egregious blunder of confounding these things? or, understanding the true sense of his words, is he rash and shameless enough to assert that the moral code of the Bible excites the abhorrence of good men? In fact and in truth, this moral code, which he reviles, instead of being abhorred, is entitled to, and has received, the profoundest respect of all honest and sensible persons. The second table of the Decalogue is a perfect compendium of those duties which every man owes to himself, his family, and his neighbor. In a few simple words, which he can commit to memory almost in a minute, it teaches him to purify his heart from covetousness; to live decently, to injure nobody in reputation, person, or property, and to give every one his own. By the poets, the prophets, and the sages of Israel, these great elements are expanded into a volume of minuter rules, so clear, so impressive, and yet so solemn and so lofty, that no preëxisting system of philosophy can compare with it for a moment. If this vain mortal is not blind with passion, he will see, upon reflection, that he has attacked the Old Testament precisely where it is most impregnable.

Dismissing his groundless charge against the moral code, we come to his strictures on the civil government of the Jews, which he says was so bad and unjust that the Lawgiver by

whom it was established must have been as savagely cruel as the Creator that made storms and pestilences; and the work of both was more worthy of a devil than a god. His language is recklessly bad, very defective in method, and altogether lacking in precision. But, apart from the ribaldry of it, which I do not feel myself bound to notice, I find four objections to the Jewish constitution—not more than four—which are definite enough to admit of an answer. These relate to the provisions of the Mosaic law on the subjects of (1) Blasphemy and Idolatry; (2) War; (3) Slavery; (4) Polygamy. In these respects he pronounces the Jewish system not only unwise but criminally unjust.

Here let me call attention to the difficulty of reasoning about justice with a man who has no acknowledged standard of right and wrong. What is justice? That which accords with law; and the supreme law is the will of God. But I am dealing with an adversary who does not admit that there is a God. Then for him there is no standard at all; one thing is as right as another, and all things are equally wrong. Without a sovereign ruler there is no law, and where there is no law there can be no transgression. It is the misfortune of the atheistic theory that it makes the moral world an anarchy; it refers all ethical questions to that confused tribunal where chaos sits as umpire and “by decision more embroils the fray.” But through the whole of this cloudy paper there runs a vein of presumptuous egoism which says as plainly as words can speak it that the author holds *himself* to be the ultimate judge of all good and evil; what he approves is right, and what he dislikes is certainly wrong. Of course I concede nothing to a claim like that. I will not admit that the Jewish constitution is a thing to be condemned merely because he curses it. I appeal from his profane malediction to the conscience of men who have a rule to judge by. Such persons will readily see that his specific objections to the statesmanship which established the civil government of the Hebrew people are extremely shallow, and do not furnish the shade of an excuse for the indecency of his general abuse.

First. He regards the punishments inflicted for blasphemy and idolatry as being immoderately cruel. Considering them merely as religious offenses,—as sins against God alone,—I agree that civil laws should notice them not at all. But sometimes they affect very injuriously certain social rights which it is the duty of the state to protect. Wantonly to shock the religious feelings

of your neighbor is a grievous wrong. To utter blasphemy or obscenity in the presence of a Christian woman is hardly better than to strike her in the face. Still, neither policy nor justice requires them to be ranked among the highest crimes in a government constituted like ours. But things were wholly different under the Jewish theocracy, where God was the personal head of the state. There blasphemy was a breach of political allegiance; idolatry was an overt act of treason; to worship the gods of the hostile heathen was deserting to the public enemy, and giving him aid and comfort. These are crimes which every independent community has always punished with the utmost rigor. In our own very recent history, they were repressed at the cost of more lives than Judea ever contained at any one time.

Mr. Ingersoll not only ignores these considerations, but he goes the length of calling God a religious persecutor and a tyrant because he does not encourage and reward the service and devotion paid by his enemies to the false gods of the pagan world. He professes to believe that all kinds of worship are equally meritorious, and should meet the same acceptance from the true God. It is almost incredible that such drivel as this should be uttered by anybody. But Mr. Ingersoll not only expresses the thought plainly—he urges it with the most extravagant figures of his florid rhetoric. He quotes the first commandment, in which Jehovah claims for himself the exclusive worship of His people, and cites, in contrast, the promise put in the mouth of Brahma, that he will appropriate the worship of all gods to himself, and reward all worshippers alike. These passages being compared, he declares the first “a dungeon, where crawl the things begot of jealous slime”; the other, “great as the domed firmament, inlaid with suns.” Why is the living God, whom Christians believe to be the Lord of liberty and Father of lights, denounced as the keeper of a loathsome dungeon? Because he refuses to encourage and reward the worship of Mammon and Moloch, of Belial and Baal; of Bacchus, with its drunken orgies, and Venus, with its wanton obscenities; the bestial religion which degraded the soul of Egypt and the “dark idolatries of alienated Judah,” polluted with the moral filth of all the nations round about. Let the reader decide whether this man, entertaining such sentiments and opinions, is fit to be a teacher, or at all likely to lead us in the way we should go.

Second. Under the constitution which God provided for the Jews, they had, like every other nation, the war-making power. They could not have lived a day without it. The right to exist implied the right to repel, with all their strength, the opposing force which threatened their destruction. It is true, also, that in the exercise of this power they did not observe those rules of courtesy and humanity which have been adopted in modern times by civilized belligerents. Why? Because their enemies, being mere savages, did not understand, and would not practice, any rule whatever; and the Jews were bound *ex necessitate rei*—not merely justified by the *lex talionis*—to do as their enemies did. In your treatment of hostile barbarians, you not only may lawfully, but must necessarily, adopt their mode of warfare. If they come to conquer you, they may be conquered by you; if they give no quarter, they are entitled to none; if the death of your whole population be their purpose, you may defeat it by exterminating theirs. This sufficiently answers the silly talk of atheists and semi-atheists about the warlike wickedness of the Jews.

But Mr. Ingersoll positively, and with the emphasis of supreme and all-sufficient authority, declares that “a war of conquest is simply murder.” He sustains this proposition by no argument founded in principle. He puts sentiment in place of law, and denounces aggressive fighting because it is offensive to his “tender and refined soul”: the atrocity of it is therefore proportioned to the sensibilities of his own heart. He proves war a desperately wicked thing by continually vaunting his own love for small children. Babes—sweet babes—the prattle of babes—are the subjects of his most pathetic eloquence, and his idea of music is embodied in the commonplace expression of a Hindu, that the lute is sweet only to those who have not heard the prattle of their own children. All this is very amiable in him, and the more so, perhaps, as these objects of his affection are the young ones of a race in his opinion miscreated by an evil-working chance. But his *philoprogenitiveness* proves nothing against Jew or Gentile, seeing that all have it in an equal degree, and those feel it most who make the least parade of it. Certainly it gives him no authority to malign the God who implanted it alike in the hearts of us all. But I admit that his benevolence becomes peculiar and ultra when it extends to beasts as well as babes. He is struck with horror by the sacrificial solemnities of the Jewish religion.

"The killing of those animals was," he says, "a terrible system," a "shedding of innocent blood," "shocking to a refined and sensitive soul." There is such a depth of tenderness in this feeling, and such a splendor of refinement, that I give up without a struggle to the superiority of the man who merely professes it. A carnivorous American, full of beef and mutton, who mourns with indignant sorrow because bulls and goats were killed in Judea three thousand years ago, has reached the climax of sentimental goodness, and should be permitted to dictate on all questions of peace and war. Let Grotius, Vattel, and Puffendorf, as well as Moses and the prophets, hide their diminished heads.

But to show how inefficacious, for all practical purposes, a mere sentiment is when substituted for a principle, it is only necessary to recollect that Mr. Ingersoll is himself a warrior who staid not behind the mighty men of his tribe when they gathered themselves together for a war of conquest. He took the lead of a regiment as eager as himself to spoil the Philistines, "and out he went a-coloneling." How many Amalekites, and Hittites, and Amorites he put to the edge of the sword, how many wives he widowed, or how many mothers he "unbabled" cannot now be told. I do not even know how many droves of innocent oxen he condemned to the slaughter. But it is certain that his refined and tender soul took great pleasure in the terror, conflagration, blood, and tears with which the war was attended, and in all the hard oppressions which the conquered people were made to suffer afterward. I do not say that the war was either better or worse for his participation and approval. But if his own conduct (for which he professes neither penitence nor shame) was right, it was right on grounds which make it an inexcusable outrage to call the children of Israel savage criminals for carrying on wars of aggression to save the life of their government. These inconsistencies are the necessary consequence of having no rule of action and no guide for the conscience. When a man throws away the golden metewand of the law which God has provided, and takes the elastic cord of feeling for his measure of righteousness, you cannot tell from day to day what he will think or do.

Third. But Jehovah permitted his chosen people to hold the captives they took in war or purchased from the heathen as servants for life. This was slavery, and Mr. Ingersoll declares that

"in all civilized countries it is not only admitted, but it is passionately asserted, that slavery is, and always was, a hideous crime"; therefore he concludes that Jehovah was a criminal. This would be a *non sequitur*, even if the premises were true. But the premises are false: civilized countries have admitted no such thing. That slavery is a crime, under all circumstances and at all times, is a doctrine first started by the adherents of a political faction in this country, less than forty years ago. They denounced God and Christ for not agreeing with them, in terms very similar to those used here by Mr. Ingersoll. But they did not constitute the civilized world; nor were they, if the truth must be told, a very respectable portion of it. Politically, they were successful; I need not say by what means, or with what effect upon the morals of the country. Doubtless Mr. Ingersoll gets a great advantage by invoking their passions and their interests to his aid, and he knows how to use it. I can only say that, whether American Abolitionism was right or wrong under the circumstances in which we were placed, my faith and my reason both assure me that the infallible God proceeded upon good grounds when he authorized slavery in Judea. Subordination of inferiors to superiors is the groundwork of human society. All improvement of our race, in this world and the next, must come from obedience to some master better and wiser than ourselves. There can be no question that, when a Jew took a neighboring savage for his bond-servant, incorporated him into his family, tamed him, taught him to work, and gave him a knowledge of the true God, he conferred upon him a most beneficent boon.

Fourth. Polygamy is another of his objections to the Mosaic constitution. Strange to say, it is not there. It is neither commanded nor prohibited; it is only discouraged. If Mr. Ingersoll were a statesman instead of a mere politician, he would see good and sufficient reasons for the forbearance to legislate directly upon the subject. It would be improper for me to set them forth here. He knows, probably, that the influence of the Christian Church alone, and without the aid of state enactments, has extirpated this bad feature of Asiatic manners wherever its doctrines were carried. As the Christian faith prevails in any community, in that proportion precisely marriage is consecrated to its true purpose, and all intercourse between the sexes refined and purified. Mr. Ingersoll got his own devotion to the principle of monogamy—his own respect for the highest type of female

character—his own belief in the virtue of fidelity to one good wife—from the example and precept of his Christian parents. I speak confidently, because these are sentiments which do not grow in the heart of the natural man without being planted. Why, then, does he throw polygamy into the face of the religion which abhors it? Because he is nothing if not political. The Mormons believe in polygamy, and the Mormons are unpopular. They are guilty of having not only many wives but much property, and if a war could be hissed up against them, its fruits might be more “gaynefull pilladge than wee doe now conceyve of.” It is a cunning maneuver, this, of strengthening atheism by enlisting anti-Mormon rapacity against the God of the Christians. I can only protest against the use he would make of these and other political interests. It is not argument; it is mere stump oratory.

I think I have repelled all of Mr. Ingersoll’s accusations against the Old Testament that are worth noticing, and I might stop here. But I will not close upon him without letting him see, at least, some part of the case on the other side.

I do not enumerate in detail the positive proofs which support the authenticity of the Hebrew Bible, though they are at hand in great abundance, because the evidence in support of the new dispensation will establish the verity of the old—the two being so connected together that if one is true the other cannot be false.

When Jesus of Nazareth announced himself to be Christ, the Son of God, in Judea, many thousand persons who heard his words and saw his works believed in his divinity without hesitation. Since the morning of the creation, nothing has occurred so wonderful as the rapidity with which this religion spread itself abroad. Men who were in the noon of life when Jesus was put to death as a malefactor lived to see him worshiped as God by organized bodies of believers in every province of the Roman empire. In a few more years it took complete possession of the general mind, supplanted all other religions, and wrought a radical change in human society. It did this in the face of obstacles which, according to every human calculation, were insurmountable. It was antagonized by all the evil propensities, the sensual wickedness, and the vulgar crimes of the multitude, as well as the polished vices of the luxurious classes; and was most violently opposed even by those sentiments and habits of thought which were esteemed virtuous, such as patriotism and military

heroism. It encountered not only the ignorance and superstition, but the learning and philosophy, the poetry, eloquence, and art of the time. Barbarism and civilization were alike its deadly enemies. The priesthood of every established religion and the authority of every government were arrayed against it. All these, combined together and roused to ferocious hostility, were overcome, not by the enticing words of man's wisdom, but by the simple presentation of a pure and peaceful doctrine, preached by obscure strangers at the daily peril of their lives. Is it Mr. Ingersoll's idea that this happened by chance, like the creation of the world? If not, there are but two other ways to account for it: either the evidence by which the Apostles were able to prove the supernatural origin of the gospel was overwhelming and irresistible, or else its propagation was provided for and carried on by the direct aid of the Divine Being himself. Between these two, infidelity may make its own choice.

Just here another dilemma presents its horns to our adversary. If Christianity was a human fabrication, its authors must have been either good men or bad. It is a moral impossibility—a mere contradiction in terms—to say that good, honest, and true men practiced a gross and willful deception upon the world. It is equally incredible that any combination of knaves, however base, would fraudulently concoct a religious system to denounce themselves, and to invoke the curse of God upon their own conduct. Men that love lies, love not such lies as that. Is there any way out of this difficulty, except by confessing that Christianity is what it purports to be—a divine revelation?

The acceptance of Christianity by a large portion of the generation contemporary with its Founder and his apostles was, under the circumstances, an adjudication as solemn and authoritative as mortal intelligence could pronounce. The record of that judgment has come down to us, accompanied by the depositions of the principal witnesses. In the course of eighteen centuries many efforts have been made to open the judgment or set it aside on the ground that the evidence was insufficient to support it. But on every rehearing the wisdom and virtue of mankind have re-affirmed it. And now comes Mr. Ingersoll, to try the experiment of another bold, bitter, and fierce re-argument. I will present some of the considerations which would compel me, if I were a judge or juror in the cause, to decide it just as it was decided originally.

First. There is no good reason to doubt that the statements of the evangelists, as we have them now, are genuine. The multiplication of copies was a sufficient guarantee against any material alteration of the text. Mr. Ingersoll speaks of interpolations made by the fathers of the Church. All he knows and all he has ever heard on that subject is that some of the innumerable transcripts contained errors which were discovered and corrected. That simply proves the present integrity of the documents.

Second. I call these statements *depositions*, because they are entitled to that kind of credence which we give to declarations made under oath—but in a much higher degree, for they are more than sworn to. They were made in the immediate prospect of death. Perhaps this would not affect the conscience of an atheist,—neither would an oath,—but these people manifestly believed in a judgment after death, before a God of truth, whose displeasure they feared above all things.

Third. The witnesses could not have been mistaken. The nature of the facts precluded the possibility of any delusion about them. For every averment they had “the sensible and true avouch of their own eyes” and ears. Besides, they were plain-thinking, sober, unimaginary men, who, unlike Mr. Ingersoll, always, under all circumstances, and especially in the presence of eternity, recognized the difference between mountains and clouds. It is inconceivable how any fact could be proven by evidence more conclusive than the statement of such persons, publicly given and steadfastly persisted in through every kind of persecution, imprisonment, and torture to the last agonies of a lingering death.

Fourth. Apart from these terrible tests, the more ordinary claims to credibility are not wanting. They were men of unimpeachable character. The most virulent enemies of the cause they spoke and died for have never suggested a reason for doubting their personal honesty. But there is affirmative proof that they and their fellow-disciples were held by those who knew them in the highest estimation for truthfulness. Wherever they made their report it was not only believed, but believed with a faith so implicit that thousands were ready at once to seal it with their blood.

Fifth. The tone and temper of their narrative impress us with a sentiment of profound respect. It is an artless, unimpas-

sioned, simple story. No argument, no rhetoric, no epithets, no praises of friends, no denunciation of enemies, no attempts at concealment. How strongly these qualities commend the testimony of a witness to the confidence of judge and jury is well known to all who have any experience in such matters.

Sixth. The statements made by the evangelists are alike upon every important point, but are different in form and expression, some of them including details which the others omit. These variations make it perfectly certain that there could have been no previous concert between the witnesses, and that each spoke independently of the others, according to his own conscience and from his own knowledge. In considering the testimony of several witnesses to the same transaction, their substantial agreement upon the main facts, with circumstantial differences in the detail, is always regarded as the great characteristic of truth and honesty. There is no rule of evidence more universally adopted than this—none better sustained by general experience, or more immovably fixed in the good sense of mankind. Mr. Ingersoll, himself, admits the rule and concedes its soundness. The logical consequence of that admission is that we are bound to take this evidence as incontestably true. But mark the infatuated perversity with which he seeks to evade it. He says that when we claim that the witnesses were inspired, the rule does not apply, because the witnesses then speak what is known to him who inspired them, and all must speak exactly the same, even to the minutest detail. Mr. Ingersoll's notion of an inspired witness is that he is no witness at all, but an irresponsible medium who unconsciously and involuntarily raps out or writes down whatever he is prompted to say. But this is a false assumption, not countenanced or even suggested by anything contained in the Scriptures. The apostles and evangelists are expressly declared to be witnesses, in the proper sense of the word, called and sent to testify the truth according to their knowledge. If they had all told the same story in the same way, without variation, and accounted for its uniformity by declaring that they were inspired, and had spoken without knowing whether their words were true or false, where would have been their claim to credibility? But they testified what they knew; and here comes an infidel critic impugning their testimony because the impress of truth is stamped upon its face.

Seventh. It does not appear that the statements of the evangelists were ever denied by any person who pretended to know the facts. Many there were in that age and afterward who resisted the belief that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and only Saviour of man; but his wonderful works, the miraculous purity of his life, the unapproachable loftiness of his doctrines, his trial and condemnation by a judge who pronounced him innocent, his patient suffering, his death on the cross, and resurrection from the grave,—of these not the faintest contradiction was attempted, if we except the false and feeble story which the elders and chief priests bribed the guard at the tomb to put in circulation.

Eighth. What we call the fundamental truths of Christianity consist of great public events which are sufficiently established by history without special proof. The value of mere historical evidence increases according to the importance of the facts in question, their general notoriety, and the magnitude of their visible consequences. Cornwallis surrendered to Washington at Yorktown, and changed the destiny of Europe and America. Nobody would think of calling a witness or even citing an official report to prove it. Julius Cæsar was assassinated. We do not need to prove that fact like an ordinary murder. He was master of the world, and his death was followed by a war with the conspirators, the battle at Philippi, the quarrel of the victorious triumvirs, Actium, and the permanent establishment of imperial government under Augustus. The life and character, the death and resurrection, of Jesus are just as visibly connected with events which even an infidel must admit to be of equal importance. The Church rose and armed herself in righteousness for conflict with the powers of darkness; innumerable multitudes of the best and wisest rallied to her standard and died in her cause; her enemies employed the coarse and vulgar machinery of human government against her, and her professors were brutally murdered in large numbers; her triumph was complete; the gods of Greece and Rome crumbled on their altars; the world was revolutionized and human society was transformed. The course of these events, and a thousand others, which reach down to the present hour, received its first propulsion from the transcendent fact of Christ's crucifixion. Moreover, we find the memorial monuments of the original truth planted all along the way. The sacraments of baptism and the supper constantly point us back to the

author and finisher of our faith. The mere historical evidence is for these reasons much stronger than what we have for other occurrences which are regarded as undeniable. When to this is added the cumulative evidence given directly and positively by eye-witnesses of irreproachable character, and wholly uncontradicted, the proof becomes so strong that the disbelief we hear of seems like a kind of insanity.

“It is the very error of the moon,
Which comes more near the earth than she was wont,
And makes men mad!”

From the facts established by this evidence, it follows irresistibly that the Gospel has come to us from God. That silences all reasoning about the wisdom and justice of its doctrines, since it is impossible even to imagine that wrong can be done or commanded by that Sovereign Being whose will alone is the ultimate standard of all justice.

But Mr. Ingersoll is still dissatisfied. He raises objections as false, fleeting, and baseless as clouds, and insists that they are as stable as the mountains, whose everlasting foundations are laid by the hand of the Almighty. I will compress his propositions into plain words printed in *italics*, and, taking a look at his misty creations, let them roll away and vanish into air, one after another.

Christianity offers eternal salvation as the reward of belief alone. This is a misrepresentation simple and naked. No such doctrine is propounded in the Scriptures, or in the creed of any Christian church. On the contrary, it is distinctly taught that faith avails nothing without repentance, reformation, and newness of life.

The mere failure to believe it is punished in hell. I have never known any Christian man or woman to assert this. It is universally agreed that children too young to understand it do not need to believe it. And this exemption extends to adults who have never seen the evidence, or, from weakness of intellect, are incapable of weighing it. Lunatics and idiots are not in the least danger, and, for aught I know, this category may, by a stretch of God's mercy, include minds constitutionally sound, but with faculties so perverted by education, habit, or passion that they are incapable of reasoning. I sincerely hope that, upon this or some other principle, Mr. Ingersoll may escape the hell he talks about

so much. But there is no direct promise to save him in spite of himself. The plan of redemption contains no express covenant to pardon one who rejects it with scorn and hatred. Our hope for him rests upon the infinite compassion of that gracious Being who prayed on the cross for the insulting enemies who nailed him there.

The mystery of the second birth is incomprehensible. Christ established a new kingdom in the world, but not of it. Subjects were admitted to the privileges and protection of its government by a process equivalent to naturalization. To be born again, or regenerated, is to be naturalized. The words all mean the same thing. Does Mr. Ingersoll want to disgrace his own intellect by pretending that he cannot see this simple analogy?

The doctrine of the atonement is absurd, unjust, and immoral. The plan of salvation, or any plan for the rescue of sinners from the legal operation of divine justice, could have been framed only in the councils of the Omniscient. Necessarily its heights and depths are not easily fathomed by finite intelligence. But the greatest, ablest, wisest, and most virtuous men that ever lived have given it their profoundest consideration, and found it to be not only authorized by revelation, but theoretically conformed to their best and highest conceptions of infinite goodness. Nevertheless, here is a rash and superficial man, without training or habits of reflection, who, upon a mere glance, declares that it "must be abandoned," because it *seems to him* "absurd, unjust, and immoral." I would not abridge his freedom of thought or speech, and the *argumentum ad verecundiam* would be lost upon him. Otherwise I might suggest that, when he finds all authority, human and divine, against him, he had better speak in a tone less arrogant.

He does not comprehend how justice and mercy can be blended together in the plan of redemption, and therefore it cannot be true. A thing is not necessarily false because he does not understand it: he cannot annihilate a principle or a fact by ignoring it. There are many truths in heaven and earth which no man can see through; for instance, the union of man's soul with his body is not only an unknowable but an unimaginable mystery. Is it therefore false that a connection does exist between matter and spirit?

How, he asks, can the sufferings of an innocent person satisfy justice for the sins of the guilty? This raises a metaphysical

question, which it is not necessary or possible for me to discuss here. As matter of fact, Christ died that sinners might be reconciled to God, and in that sense he died for them; that is, to furnish them with the means of averting divine justice, which their crimes had provoked.

What, he again asks, would we think of a man who allowed another to die for a crime which he himself had committed? I answer that a man who, by any contrivance, causes his own offense to be visited upon the head of an innocent person is unspeakably depraved. But are Christians guilty of this baseness because they accept the blessings of an institution which their great benefactor died to establish? Loyalty to the King who has erected a most beneficent government for us at the cost of his life—fidelity to the Master who bought us with his blood—is not the fraudulent substitution of an innocent person in place of a criminal.

The doctrine of non-resistance, forgiveness of injuries, reconciliation with enemies, as taught in the New Testament, is the child of weakness, degrading, and unjust. This is the whole substance of a long, rambling diatribe, as incoherent as a sick man's dream. Christianity does not forbid the necessary defense of civil society, or the proper vindication of personal rights. But to cherish animosity, to thirst for mere revenge, to hoard up wrongs, real or fancied, and lie in wait for the chance of paying them back; to be impatient, unforgiving, malicious, and cruel to all who have crossed us—these diabolical propensities are checked and curbed by the authority and spirit of the Christian religion, and the application of it has converted men from low savages into refined and civilized beings.

The punishment of sinners in eternal hell is excessive. The future of the soul is a subject on which we have very dark views. In our present state, the mind takes in no idea except what is conveyed to it through the bodily senses. All our conceptions of the spiritual world are derived from some analogy to material things, and this analogy must necessarily be very remote, because the nature of the subjects compared is so diverse that a close similarity cannot be even supposed. No revelation has lifted the veil between time and eternity; but in shadowy figures we are warned that a very marked distinction will be made between the good and the bad in the next world. Speculative opinions concerning the punishment of the wicked, its nature and dura-

tion, vary with the temper and the imaginations of men. Doubtless we are many of us in error: but how can Mr. Ingersoll enlighten us? Acknowledging no standard of right and wrong in this world, he can have no theory of rewards and punishments in the next. The deeds done in the body, whether good or evil, are all morally alike in his eyes, and if there be in heaven a congregation of the just, he sees no reason why the worst rogue should not be a member of it. It is supposed, however, that man has a soul as well as a body, and that both are subject to certain laws, which cannot be violated without incurring the proper penalty—or consequence, if he likes that word better.

If Christ was God, he knew that his followers would persecute and murder men for their opinions; yet he did not forbid it. There is but one way to deal with this accusation, and that is to contradict it flatly. Nothing can be conceived more striking than the prohibition, not only of persecution, but of all the passions which lead or incite to it. No follower of Christ indulges in malice even to his enemy without violating the plainest rule of his faith. He cannot love God and hate his brother: if he says he can, St. John pronounces him a liar. The broadest benevolence, universal philanthropy, inexhaustible charity, are inculcated in every line of the New Testament. It is plain that Mr. Ingersoll never read a chapter of it; otherwise he would not have ventured upon this palpable falsification of its doctrines. Who told him that the devilish spirit of persecution was authorized, or encouraged, or not forbidden, by the Gospel? The person, whoever it was, who imposed upon his trusting ignorance should be given up to the just reprobation of his fellow-citizens.

Christians in modern times carry on wars of detraction and slander against one another. The discussions of theological subjects by men who believe in the fundamental doctrines of Christ are singularly free from harshness and abuse. Of course I cannot speak with absolute certainty, but I believe most confidently that there is not in all the religious polemics of this century as much slanderous invective as can be found in any ten lines of Mr. Ingersoll's writings. Of course I do not include political preachers among my models of charity and forbearance. They are a mendacious set, but Christianity is no more responsible for their misconduct than it is for the treachery of Judas Iscariot or the wrongs done to Paul by Alexander the coppersmith.

But, says he, Christians have been guilty of wanton and wicked persecution. It is true that some persons, professing Christianity, have violated the fundamental principles of their faith by inflicting violent injuries and bloody wrongs upon their fellow-men. But the perpetrators of these outrages were in fact not Christians: they were either hypocrites from the beginning or else base apostates—infidels or something worse—hireling wolves, whose gospel was their maw. Not one of them ever pretended to find a warrant for his conduct in any precept of Christ or any doctrine of his Church. All the wrongs of this nature which history records have been the work of politicians, aided often by priests and ministers who were willing to deny their Lord and desert to the enemy, for the sake of their temporal interests. Take the cases most commonly cited and see if this be not a true account of them. The *auto da fé* of Spain and Portugal, the burnings at Smithfield, and the whipping of women in Massachusetts, were the outcome of a cruel, false, and antichristian policy. Coligny and his adherents were killed by an order of Charles IX., at the instance of the Guises, who headed a hostile faction, and merely for reasons of state. Louis XIV. revoked the edict of Nantes, and banished the Waldenses under pain of confiscation and death; but this was done on the declared ground that the victims were not safe subjects. The brutal atrocities of Cromwell and the outrages of the Orange lodges against the Irish Catholics were not persecutions by religious people, but movements as purely political as those of the Know-Nothings, Plug-Uglys, and Blood-Tubs of this country. If the Gospel should be blamed for these acts in opposition to its principles, why not also charge it with the cruelties of Nero, or the present persecution of the Jesuits by the infidel republic of France?

Christianity is opposed to freedom of thought. The kingdom of Christ is based upon certain principles, to which it requires the assent of every one who would enter therein. If you are unwilling to own his authority and conform your moral conduct to his laws, you cannot expect that he will admit you to the privileges of his government. But naturalization is not forced upon you if you prefer to be an alien. The Gospel makes the strongest and tenderest appeal to the heart, reason, and conscience of man—entreats him to take thought for his own highest interest, and by all its moral influence provokes him to good works; but he is

not constrained by any kind of duress to leave the service or relinquish the wages of sin. Is there anything that savors of tyranny in this? A man of ordinary judgment will say, no. But Mr. Ingersoll thinks it as oppressive as the refusal of Jehovah to reward the worship of demons.

The gospel of Christ does not satisfy the hunger of the heart. That depends upon what kind of a heart it is. If it hungers after righteousness, it will surely be filled. It is probable, also, that if it hungers for the filthy food of a godless philosophy it will get what its appetite demands. That was an expressive phrase which Carlyle used when he called modern infidelity "the gospel of dirt." Those who are greedy to swallow it will doubtless be supplied satisfactorily.

Accounts of miracles are always false. Are miracles impossible? No one will say so who opens his eyes to the miracles of creation with which we are surrounded on every hand. You cannot even show that they are *a priori* improbable. God would be likely to reveal his will to the rational creatures who were required to obey it; he would authenticate in some way the right of prophets and apostles to speak in his name; supernatural power was the broad seal which he affixed to their commission. From this it follows that the improbability of a miracle is no greater than the original improbability of a revelation, and that is not improbable at all. Therefore, if the miracles of the New Testament are proved by sufficient evidence, we believe them as we believe any other established fact. They become deniable only when it is shown that the great miracle of making the world was never performed. Accordingly Mr. Ingersoll abolishes creation first, and thus clears the way to his dogmatic conclusion that *all* miracles are "the children of mendacity."

Christianity is pernicious in its moral effect, darkens the mind, narrows the soul, arrests the progress of human society, and hinders civilization. Mr. Ingersoll, as a zealous apostle of "the gospel of dirt," must be expected to throw a good deal of mud. But this is too much: it injures himself instead of defiling the object of his assault. When I answer that all we have of virtue, justice, intellectual liberty, moral elevation, refinement, benevolence, and true wisdom came to us from that source which he reviles as the fountain of evil, I am not merely putting one assertion against the other; for I have the advantage, which he has not, of speaking what every tolerably well-informed man knows to be true.

Reflect what kind of a world this was when the disciples of Christ undertook to reform it, and compare it with the condition in which their teachings have put it. In its mighty metropolis, the center of its intellectual and political power, the best men were addicted to vices so debasing that I could not even allude to them without soiling the paper I write upon. All manner of unprincipled wickedness was practiced in the private life of the whole population without concealment or shame, and the magistrates were thoroughly and universally corrupt. Benevolence in any shape was altogether unknown. The helpless and the weak got neither justice nor mercy. There was no relief for the poor, no succor for the sick, no refuge for the unfortunate. In all pagandom there was not a hospital, asylum, almshouse, or organized charity of any sort. The indifference to human life was literally frightful. The order of a successful leader to assassinate his opponents was always obeyed by his followers with the utmost alacrity and pleasure. It was a special amusement of the populace to witness the shows at which men were compelled to kill one another, to be torn in pieces by wild beasts, or otherwise "butchered, to make a Roman holiday." In every province paganism enacted the same cold-blooded cruelties; oppression and robbery ruled supreme; murder went rampaging and red over all the earth. The Church came, and her light penetrated this moral darkness like a new sun. She covered the globe with institutions of mercy, and thousands upon thousands of her disciples devoted themselves exclusively to works of charity at the sacrifice of every earthly interest. Her earliest adherents were killed without remorse—beheaded, crucified, sawn asunder, thrown to the beasts, or covered with pitch, piled up in great heaps, and slowly burnt to death. But her faith was made perfect through suffering, and the law of love rose in triumph from the ashes of her martyrs. This religion has come down to us through the ages, attended all the way by righteousness, justice, temperance, mercy, transparent truthfulness, exulting hope, and white-winged charity. Never was its influence for good more plainly perceptible than now. It has not converted, purified, and reformed all men, for its first principle is the freedom of the human will, and there are those who choose to reject it. But to the mass of mankind, directly and indirectly, it has brought uncounted benefits and blessings. Abolish it—take away the restraints which it imposes on evil passions—silence the

admonitions of its preachers—let all Christians cease their labors of charity—blot out from history the records of its heroic benevolence—repeal the laws it has enacted and the institutions it has built up—let its moral principles be abandoned and all its miracles of light be extinguished—what would we come to? I need not answer this question: the experiment has been partially tried. The French nation formally renounced Christianity, denied the existence of the Supreme Being, and so satisfied the hunger of the infidel heart for a time. What followed? Universal depravity, garments rolled in blood, fantastic crimes unimagined before, which startled the earth with their sublime atrocity. The American people have and ought to have no special desire to follow that terrible example of guilt and misery.

It is impossible to discuss this subject within the limits of a review. No doubt the effort to be short has made me obscure. If Mr. Ingersoll thinks himself wronged, or his doctrines misconstrued, let him not lay my fault at the door of the Church, or cast his censure on the clergy.

“Adsum qui feci, in me convertite ferrum.”

J. S. BLACK.

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

III.

By ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

"Apart from moral conduct, all that man thinks himself able to do, in order to become acceptable to God, is mere superstition and religious folly."
KANT.

SEVERAL months ago, THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW asked me to write an article, saying that it would be published if some one would furnish a reply. I wrote the article that appeared in the August number, and by me it was entitled "Is All of the Bible Inspired?" Not until the article was written did I know who was expected to answer. I make this explanation for the purpose of dissipating the impression that Mr. Black had been challenged by me. To have struck his shield with my lance might have given birth to the impression that I was somewhat doubtful as to the correctness of my position. I naturally expected an answer from some professional theologian, and was surprised to find that a reply had been written by a "policeman," who imagined that he had answered my arguments by simply telling me that my statements were false. It is somewhat unfortunate that in a discussion like this any one should resort to the slightest personal detraction. The theme is great enough to engage the highest faculties of the human mind, and in the investigation of such a subject vituperation is singularly and vulgarly out of place. Arguments cannot be answered with insults. It is unfortunate that the intellectual arena should be entered by a "policeman," who has more confidence in concussion than discussion. Kindness is strength. Good-nature is often mistaken for virtue, and good health sometimes passes for genius. Anger blows out the lamp of the mind. In the examination of a great and important question, every one should be serene, slow-pulsed, and calm. Intelligence is not the foundation of arrogance. Insolence is not logic. Epi-

thets are the arguments of malice. Candor is the courage of the soul. Leaving the objectionable portions of Mr. Black's reply, feeling that so grand a subject should not be blown and tainted with malicious words, I proceed to answer as best I may the arguments he has urged.

I am made to say that "the universe is natural"; that "it came into being of its own accord"; that "it made its own laws at the start, and afterward improved itself considerably by spontaneous evolution."

I did say that "the universe is natural," but I did not say that "it came into being of its own accord"; neither did I say that "it made its own laws and afterward improved itself." The universe, according to my idea, is, always was, and forever will be. It did not "come into being," it is the one eternal being,—the only thing that ever did, does, or can exist. It did not "make its own laws." We know nothing of what we call the laws of nature except as we gather the idea of law from the uniformity of phenomena springing from like conditions. To make myself clear: Water always runs down-hill. The theist says that this happens because there is behind the phenomenon an active law. As a matter of fact, law is this side of the phenomenon. Law does not cause the phenomenon, but the phenomenon causes the idea of law in our minds; and this idea is produced from the fact that under like circumstances the same phenomenon always happens. Mr. Black probably thinks that the difference in the weight of rocks and clouds was created by law; that parallel lines fail to unite only because it is illegal; that diameter and circumference could have been so made that it would be a greater distance across than around a circle; that a straight line could inclose a triangle if not prevented by law, and that a little legislation could make it possible for two bodies to occupy the same space at the same time. It seems to me that law cannot be the cause of phenomena, but is an effect produced in our minds by their succession and resemblance. To put a God back of the universe, compels us to admit that there was a time when nothing existed except this God; that this God had lived from eternity in an infinite vacuum, and in absolute idleness. The mind of every thoughtful man is forced to one of these two conclusions: either that the universe is self-existent, or that it was created by a self-existent being. To my mind, there are far more difficulties in the second hypothesis than in the first.

Of course, upon a question like this, nothing can be absolutely known. We live on an atom called Earth, and what we know of the infinite is almost infinitely limited; but, little as we know, all have an equal right to give their honest thought. Life is a shadowy, strange, and winding road on which we travel for a little way—a few short steps—just from the cradle, with its lullaby of love, to the low and quiet way-side inn, where all at last must sleep, and where the only salutation is—Good-night.

I know as little as any one else about the “plan” of the universe; and as to the “design,” I know just as little. It will not do to say that the universe was designed, and therefore there must be a designer. There must first be proof that it was “designed.” It will not do to say that the universe has a “plan,” and then assert that there must have been an infinite maker. The idea that a design must have a beginning and that a designer need not, is a simple expression of human ignorance. We find a watch, and we say: “So curious and wonderful a thing must have had a maker.” We find the watch-maker, and we say: “So curious and wonderful a thing as man must have had a maker.” We find God, and we then say: “He is so wonderful that he must *not* have had a maker.” In other words, all things a little wonderful must have been created, but it is possible for a something to be so wonderful that it always existed. One would suppose that just as the wonder increased the necessity for a creator increased, because it is the wonder of the thing that suggests the idea of creation. Is it possible that a designer exists from all eternity without design? Was there no design in having an infinite designer? For me, it is hard to see the plan or design in earthquakes and pestilences. It is somewhat difficult to discern the design or the benevolence in so making the world that billions of animals live only on the agonies of others. The justice of God is not visible to me in the history of this world. When I think of the suffering and death, of the poverty and crime, of the cruelty and malice, of the heartlessness of this “design” and “plan,” where beak and claw and tooth tear and rend the quivering flesh of weakness and despair, I cannot convince myself that it is the result of infinite wisdom, benevolence, and justice.

Most Christians have seen and recognized this difficulty, and have endeavored to avoid it by giving God an opportunity in another world to rectify the seeming mistakes of this. Mr.

Black, however, avoids the entire question by saying: "We have neither jurisdiction nor capacity to rejudge the justice of God." In other words, we have no right to think upon this subject, no right to examine the questions most vitally affecting human kind. We are simply to accept the ignorant statements of barbarian dead. This question cannot be settled by saying that "it would be a mere waste of time and space to enumerate the proofs which show that the Universe was created by a preëxistent and self-conscious Being." The time and space should have been "wasted," and the proofs should have been enumerated. These "proofs" are what the wisest and greatest are trying to find. Logic is not satisfied with assertion. It cares nothing for the opinions of the "great,"—nothing for the prejudices of the many, and least of all for the superstitions of the dead. In the world of Science, a fact is a legal tender. Assertions and miracles are base and spurious coins. We have the right to rejudge the justice even of a god. No one should throw away his reason—the fruit of all experience. It is the intellectual capital of the soul, the only light, the only guide, and without it the brain becomes the palace of an idiot king, attended by a retinue of thieves and hypocrites.

Of course it is admitted that most of the Ten Commandments are wise and just. In passing, it may be well enough to say, that the commandment, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth," was the absolute death of Art, and that not until after the destruction of Jerusalem was there a Hebrew painter or sculptor. Surely a commandment is not inspired that drives from earth the living canvas and the breathing stone—leaves all walls bare and all the niches desolate. In the Tenth Commandment we find woman placed on an exact equality with other property, which, to say the least of it, has never tended to the amelioration of her condition.

A very curious thing about these Commandments is that their supposed author violated nearly every one. From Sinai, according to the account, he said: "Thou shalt not kill," and yet he ordered the murder of millions; "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and yet he gave captured maidens to gratify the lust of captors; "Thou shalt not steal," and yet he gave to Jewish marauders the flocks and herds of others; "Thou shalt not covet

thy neighbor's house, nor his wife," and yet he allowed his chosen people to destroy the homes of neighbors and to steal their wives; "Honor thy father and thy mother," and yet this same God had thousands of fathers butchered, and with the sword of war killed children yet unborn; "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor," and yet he sent abroad "lying spirits" to deceive his own prophets, and in a hundred ways paid tribute to deceit. So far as we know, Jehovah kept only one of these Commandments—he worshiped no other god.

The religious intolerance of the Old Testament is justified upon the ground that "blasphemy was a breach of political allegiance," that "idolatry was an act of overt treason," and that "to worship the gods of the hostile heathen was deserting to the public enemy, and giving him aid and comfort." According to Mr. Black, we should all have liberty of conscience except when directly governed by God. In that country where God is king, liberty cannot exist. In this position, I admit that he is upheld and fortified by the "sacred" text. Within the Old Testament there is no such thing as religious toleration. Within that volume can be found no mercy for an unbeliever. For all who think for themselves, there are threatenings, curses, and anathemas. Think of an infinite being who is so cruel, so unjust, that he will not allow one of his own children the liberty of thought! Think of an infinite God acting as the direct governor of a people, and yet not able to command their love! Think of the author of all mercy imbruing his hands in the blood of helpless men, women, and children, simply because he did not furnish them with intelligence enough to understand his law! An earthly father who cannot govern by affection is not fit to be a father; what, then, shall we say of an infinite being who resorts to violence, to pestilence, to disease, and famine, in the vain effort to obtain even the respect of a savage? Read this passage, red from the heart of cruelty:

"If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods which thou hast not known, thou nor thy fathers, . . . thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him, neither shalt thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him, but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people; and thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die." . . .

This is the religious liberty of the Bible. If you had lived in Palestine, and if the wife of your bosom, dearer to you than your own soul, had said: "I like the religion of India better than that of Palestine," it would have been your duty to kill her. "Your eye must not pity her, your hand must be first upon her, and afterwards the hand of all the people." If she had said: "Let us worship the sun—the sun that clothes the earth in garments of green—the sun, the great fireside of the world—the sun that covers the hills and valleys with flowers—that gave me your face, and made it possible for me to look into the eyes of my babe—let us worship the sun," it was your duty to kill her. You must throw the first stone, and when against her bosom—a bosom filled with love for you—you had thrown the jagged and cruel rock, and had seen the red stream of her life oozing from the dumb lips of death, you could then look up and receive the congratulations of the God whose commandment you had obeyed. Is it possible that a being of infinite mercy ordered a husband to kill his wife for the crime of having expressed an opinion on the subject of religion? Has there been found upon the records of the savage world anything more perfectly fiendish than this commandment of Jehovah? This is justified on the ground that "blasphemy was a breach of political allegiance, and idolatry an act of overt treason." We can understand how a human king stands in need of the service of his people. We can understand how the desertion of any of his soldiers weakens his army; but were the king infinite in power, his strength would still remain the same, and under no conceivable circumstances could the enemy triumph.

I insist that, if there is an infinitely good and wise God, he beholds with pity the misfortunes of his children. I insist that such a God would know the mists, the clouds, the darkness enveloping the human mind. He would know how few stars are visible in the intellectual sky. His pity, not his wrath, would be excited by the efforts of his blind children, groping in the night to find the cause of things, and endeavoring, through their tears, to see some dawn of hope. Filled with awe by their surroundings, by fear of the unknown, he would know that when, kneeling, they poured out their gratitude to some unseen power, even to a visible idol, it was, in fact, intended for him. An infinitely good being, had he the power, would answer the reasonable prayer of an honest savage, even when addressed to wood and stone.

The atrocities of the Old Testament, the threatenings, maledictions, and curses of the "inspired book," are defended on the ground that the Jews had a right to treat their enemies as their enemies treated them; and in this connection is this remarkable statement: "In your treatment of hostile barbarians you not only may lawfully, you must necessarily, adopt their mode of warfare. If they come to conquer you, they may be conquered by you; if they give no quarter, they are entitled to none; if the death of your whole population be their purpose, you may defeat it by exterminating theirs."

For a man who is a "Christian policeman," and has taken upon himself to defend the Christian religion; for one who follows the Master who said that when smitten on one cheek you must turn the other, and who again and again enforced the idea that you must overcome evil with good, it is hardly consistent to declare that a civilized nation must of necessity adopt the warfare of savages. Is it possible that in fighting, for instance, the Indians of America, if they scalp our soldiers we should scalp theirs? If they ravish, murder, and mutilate our wives, must we treat theirs in the same manner? If they kill the babes in our cradles, must we brain theirs? If they take our captives, bind them to trees, and if their squaws fill their quivering flesh with sharpened fagots and set them on fire, that they may die clothed with flame, must our wives, our mothers, and our daughters follow the fiendish example? Is this the conclusion of the most enlightened Christianity? Will the pulpits of the United States adopt the arguments of this "policeman"? Is this the last and most beautiful blossom of the Sermon on the Mount? Is this the echo of "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do"?

Mr. Black justifies the wars of extermination and conquest because the American people fought for the integrity of their own country; fought to do away with the infamous institution of slavery; fought to preserve the jewels of liberty and justice for themselves and for their children. Is it possible that his mind is so clouded by political and religious prejudice, by the recollections of an unfortunate administration, that he sees no difference between a war of extermination and one of self-preservation? that he sees no choice between the murder of helpless age, of weeping women and of sleeping babes, and the defense of liberty and nationality?

The soldiers of the Republic did not wage a war of extermination. They did not seek to enslave their fellow-men. They did not murder trembling age. They did not sheathe their swords in women's breasts. They gave the old men bread, and let the mothers rock their babes in peace. They fought to save the world's great hope—to free a race and put the humblest hut beneath the canopy of liberty and law.

Claiming neither praise nor dispraise for the part taken by me in the civil war, for the purposes of this argument, it is sufficient to say that I am perfectly willing that my record, poor and barren as it is, should be compared with his.

Never for an instant did I suppose that any respectable American citizen could be found willing at this day to defend the institution of slavery; and never was I more astonished than when I found Mr. Black denying that civilized countries passionately assert that slavery is and always was a hideous crime. I was amazed when he declared that "the doctrine that slavery is a crime under all circumstances and at all times was first started by the adherents of a political faction in this country less than forty years ago." He tells us that "they denounced God and Christ for not agreeing with them," but that "they did not constitute the civilized world; nor were they, if the truth must be told, a very respectable portion of it. Politically they were successful; I need not say by what means, or with what effect upon the morals of the country."

Slavery held both branches of Congress, filled the chair of the Executive, sat upon the supreme bench, had in its hands all rewards, all offices; knelt in the pew, occupied the pulpit, stole human beings in the name of God, robbed the trundle-bed for love of Christ; incited mobs, led ignorance, ruled colleges, sat in the chairs of professors, dominated the public press, closed the lips of free speech, and polluted with its leprous hand every source and spring of power. The abolitionists attacked this monster. They were the bravest, grandest men of their country and their century. Denounced by thieves, hated by hypocrites, mobbed by cowards, slandered by priests, shunned by politicians, abhorred by the seekers of office,—these men "of whom the world was not worthy," in spite of all opposition, in spite of poverty and want, conquered innumerable obstacles, never faltering for one moment, never dismayed—accepting defeat with a smile born of infinite hope—knowing that they were right—

insisted and persisted until every chain was broken, until slave-pens became school-houses, and three millions of slaves became free men, women, and children. They did not measure with "the golden metewand of God," but with "the elastic cord of human feeling." They were men the latchets of whose shoes no believer in human slavery was ever worthy to unloose. And yet we are told by this modern defender of the slavery of Jehovah that they were not even respectable; and this slander is justified because the writer is assured "that the infallible God proceeded upon good grounds when he authorized slavery in Judea."

Not satisfied with having slavery in this world, Mr. Black assures us that it will last through all eternity, and that forever and forever inferiors must be subordinated to superiors. Who is the superior man? According to Mr. Black, he is superior who lives upon the unpaid labor of the inferior. With me, the superior man is the one who uses his superiority in bettering the condition of the inferior. The superior man is strength for the weak, eyes for the blind, brains for the simple; he is the one who helps carry the burden that nature has put upon the inferior. Any man who helps another to gain and retain his liberty is superior to any infallible God who authorized slavery in Judea. For my part, I would rather be the slave than the master. It is better to be robbed than to be a robber. I had rather be stolen from than to be a thief.

According to Mr. Black, there will be slavery in heaven, and fast by the throne of God will be the auction-block, and the streets of the New Jerusalem will be adorned with the whipping-post, while the music of the harp will be supplemented by the crack of the driver's whip. If some good Republican would catch Mr. Black, "incorporate him into his family, tame him, teach him to think, and give him a knowledge of the true principles of human liberty and government, he would confer upon him a most beneficent boon."

Slavery includes all other crimes. It is the joint product of the kidnapper, pirate, thief, murderer, and hypocrite. It degrades labor and corrupts leisure. To lacerate the naked back, to sell wives, to steal babes, to breed blood-hounds, to debauch your own soul—this is slavery. This is what Jehovah "authorized in Judea." This is what Mr. Black believes in still. He "measures with the golden metewand of God." I abhor slavery. With me,

liberty is not merely a means—it is an end. Without that word, all other words are empty sounds.

Mr. Black is too late with his protest against the freedom of his fellow-man. Liberty is making the tour of the world. Russia has emancipated her serfs; the slave trade is prosecuted only by thieves and pirates; Spain feels upon her cheek the burning blush of shame; Brazil with proud and happy eyes is looking for the dawn of freedom's day; the people of the South rejoice that slavery is no more, and every good and honest man (excepting Mr. Black), of every land and clime, hopes that the limbs of men will never feel again the weary weight of chains.

We are informed by Mr. Black that polygamy is neither commanded nor prohibited in the Old Testament—that it is only “discouraged.” It seems to me that a little legislation on that subject might have tended to its “discouragement.” But where is the legislation? In the moral code, which Mr. Black assures us “consists of certain immutable rules to govern the conduct of all men at all times and at all places in their private and personal relation with others,” not one word is found on the subject of polygamy. There is nothing “discouraging” in the Ten Commandments, nor in the records of any conversation Jehovah is claimed to have had with Moses upon Sinai. The life of Abraham, the story of Jacob and Laban, the duty of a brother to be the husband of the widow of his deceased brother, the life of David, taken in connection with the practice of one who is claimed to have been the wisest of men—all these things are probably relied on to show that polygamy was at least “discouraged.” Certainly, Jehovah had time to instruct Moses as to the infamy of polygamy. He could have spared a few moments from a description of the patterns of tongs and basins, for a subject so important as this. A few words in favor of the one wife and the one husband—in favor of the virtuous and loving home—might have taken the place of instructions as to cutting the garments of priests and fashioning candlesticks and ouches of gold. If he had left out simply the order that rams' skins should be dyed red, and in its place had said, “A man shall have but one wife, and the wife but one husband,” how much better it would have been.

All the languages of the world are not sufficient to express the filth of polygamy. It makes man a beast, and woman a slave. It destroys the fireside and makes virtue an outcast. It takes us

back to the barbarism of animals, and leaves the heart a den in which crawl and hiss the slimy serpents of most loathsome lust. And yet Mr. Black insists that we owe to the Bible the present elevation of woman. Where will he find in the Old Testament the rights of wife, and mother, and daughter defined? Even in the New Testament she is told to "learn in silence with all subjection"; that she "is not suffered to teach, nor to usurp any authority over the man, but to be in silence." She is told that "the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." In other words, there is the same difference between the wife and husband that there is between the husband and Christ.

The reasons given for this infamous doctrine are that "Adam was first formed, and then Eve"; that "Adam was not deceived," but that "the woman being deceived, was in the transgression." These childish reasons are the only ones given by the inspired writers. We are also told that "a man, indeed, ought to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God"; but that "the woman is the glory of the man," and this is justified from the fact, and the remarkable fact, set forth in the very next verse—that "the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man." And the same gallant Apostle says: "Neither was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man"; "Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as unto the Lord; for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church, and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be subject to their own husbands in everything." These are the passages that have liberated woman!

According to the Old Testament, woman had to ask pardon, and had to be purified, for the crime of having borne sons and daughters. If in this world there is a figure of perfect purity, it is a mother holding in her thrilled and happy arms her child. The doctrine that woman is the slave, or serf, of man—whether it comes from heaven or from hell, from God or a demon, from the golden streets of the New Jerusalem or from the very Sodom of perdition—is savagery, pure and simple.

In no country in the world had women less liberty than in the Holy Land, and no monarch held in less esteem the rights of wives and mothers than Jehovah of the Jews. The position of woman was far better in Egypt than in Palestine. Before the

pyramids were built, the sacred songs of Isis were sung by women, and women with pure hands had offered sacrifices to the gods. Before Moses was born, women had sat upon the Egyptian throne. Upon ancient tombs the husband and wife are represented as seated in the same chair. In Persia women were priests, and in some of the oldest civilizations "they were revered on earth, and worshiped afterward as goddesses in heaven." At the advent of Christianity, in all pagan countries women officiated at the sacred altars. They guarded the eternal fire. They kept the sacred books. From their lips came the oracles of fate. Under the domination of the Christian church, woman became the merest slave for at least a thousand years. It was claimed that through woman the race had fallen, and that her loving kiss had poisoned all the springs of life. Christian priests asserted that but for her crime the world would have been an Eden still. The ancient fathers exhausted their eloquence in the denunciation of woman, and repeated again and again the slander of St. Paul. The condition of woman has improved just in proportion that man has lost confidence in the inspiration of the Bible.

For the purpose of defending the character of his infallible God, Mr. Black is forced to defend religious intolerance, wars of extermination, human slavery, and *almost* polygamy. He admits that God established slavery; that he commanded his chosen people to buy the children of the heathen; that heathen fathers and mothers did right to sell their girls and boys; that God ordered the Jews to wage wars of extermination and conquest; that it was right to kill the old and young; that God forged manacles for the human brain; that he commanded husbands to murder their wives for suggesting the worship of the sun or moon; and that every cruel, savage passage in the Old Testament was inspired by him. Such is a "policeman's" view of God.

Will Mr. Black have the kindness to state a few of his objections to the devil?

Mr. Black should have answered my arguments, instead of calling me "blasphemous" and "scurrilous." In the discussion of these questions I have nothing to do with the reputation of my opponent. His character throws no light on the subject, and is to me a matter of perfect indifference. Neither will it do for one who enters the lists as the champion of revealed religion to

say that "we have no right to rejudge the justice of God." Such a statement is a white flag. The warrior eludes the combat when he cries out that it is a "metaphysical question." He deserts the field and throws down his arms when he admits that "no revelation has lifted the veil between time and eternity." Again I ask, why were the Jewish people as wicked, cruel, and ignorant with a revelation from God, as other nations were without? Why were the worshipers of false deities as brave, as kind, and generous as those who knew the only true and living God?

How do you explain the fact that while Jehovah was waging wars of extermination, establishing slavery, and persecuting for opinions' sake, heathen philosophers were teaching that all men are brothers, equally entitled to liberty and life? You insist that Jehovah believed in slavery and yet punished the Egyptians for enslaving the Jews. Was your God once an abolitionist? Did he at that time "denounce Christ for not agreeing with him"? If slavery was a crime in Egypt, was it a virtue in Palestine? Did God treat the Canaanites better than Pharaoh did the Jews? Was it right for Jehovah to kill the children of the people because of Pharaoh's sin? Should the peasant be punished for the king's crime? Do you not know that the worst thing that can be said of Nero, Caligula, and Commodus is that they resembled the Jehovah of the Jews? Will you tell me why God failed to give his Bible to the whole world? Why did he not give the Scriptures to the Hindu, the Greek, and Roman? Why did he fail to enlighten the worshipers of "Mammon" and Moloch, of Belial and Baal, of Bacchus and Venus? After all, was not Bacchus as good as Jehovah? Is it not better to drink wine than to shed blood? Was there anything in the worship of Venus worse than giving captured maidens to satisfy the victor's lust? Did "Mammon" or Moloch do anything more infamous than to establish slavery? Did they order their soldiers to kill men, women, and children, and to save alive nothing that had breath? Do not answer these questions by saying that "no veil has been lifted between time and eternity," and that "we have no right to rejudge the justice of God."

If Jehovah was in fact God, he knew the end from the beginning. He knew that his Bible would be a breastwork behind which tyranny and hypocrisy would crouch; that it would be quoted by tyrants; that it would be the defense of robbers called kings, and of hypocrites called priests. He knew that

he had taught the Jewish people but little of importance. He knew that he found them free and left them captives. He knew that he had never fulfilled the promises made to them. He knew that while other nations had advanced in art and science, his chosen people were savage still. He promised them the world, and gave them a desert. He promised them liberty, and he made them slaves. He promised them victory, and he gave them defeat. He said they should be kings, and he made them serfs. He promised them universal empire, and gave them exile. When one finishes the Old Testament, he is compelled to say: Nothing can add to the misery of a nation whose king is Jehovah!

And here I take occasion to thank Mr. Black for having admitted that Jehovah gave no commandment against the practice of polygamy, that he established slavery, waged wars of extermination, and persecuted for opinions' sake even unto death. Most theologians endeavor to putty, patch, and paint the wretched record of inspired crime, but Mr. Black has been bold enough and honest enough to admit the truth. In this age of fact and demonstration it is refreshing to find a man who believes so thoroughly in the monstrous and miraculous, the impossible and immoral—who still clings lovingly to the legends of the bib and rattle—who through the bitter experiences of a wicked world has kept the credulity of the cradle, and finds comfort and joy in thinking about the Garden of Eden, the subtil serpent, the flood, and Babel's tower, stopped by the jargon of a thousand tongues—who reads with happy eyes the story of the burning brimstone storm that fell upon the cities of the plain, and smilingly explains the transformation of the retrospective Mrs. Lot—who laughs at Egypt's plagues and Pharaoh's whelmed and drowning hosts—eats manna with the wandering Jews, warms himself at the burning bush, sees Korah's company by the hungry earth devoured, claps his wrinkled hands with glee above the heathens' butchered babes, and longingly looks back to the patriarchal days of concubines and slaves. How touching when the learned and wise crawl back in cribs and ask to hear the rhymes and fables once again! How charming in these hard and scientific times to see old age in Superstition's lap, with eager lips upon her withered breast!

Mr. Black comes to the conclusion that the Hebrew Bible is in exact harmony with the New Testament, and that the two are

"connected together"; and "that if one is true the other cannot be false."

If this is so, then he must admit that if one is false the other cannot be true; and it hardly seems possible to me that there is a right-minded, sane man, except Mr. Black, who now believes that a God of infinite kindness and justice ever commanded one nation to exterminate another; ever ordered his soldiers to destroy men, women, and babes; ever established the institution of human slavery; ever regarded the auction-block as an altar, or a blood-hound as an apostle.

Mr. Black contends (after having answered my indictment against the Old Testament by admitting the allegations to be true) that the rapidity with which Christianity spread "proves the supernatural origin of the Gospel, or that it was propagated by the direct aid of the Divine Being himself."

Let us see. In his efforts to show that the "infallible God established slavery in Judea," he takes occasion to say that "the doctrine that slavery is a crime under all circumstances was first started by the adherents of a political faction in this country less than forty years ago"; that "they denounced God and Christ for not agreeing with them"; but that "they did not constitute the civilized world; nor were they, if the truth must be told, a very respectable portion of it." Let it be remembered that this was only forty years ago; and yet, according to Mr. Black, a few disreputable men changed the ideas of nearly fifty millions of people, changed the Constitution of the United States, liberated a race from slavery, clothed three millions of people with political rights, took possession of the Government, managed its affairs for more than twenty years, and have compelled the admiration of the civilized world. Is it Mr. Black's idea that this happened by chance? If not, then, according to him, there are but two ways to account for it: either the rapidity with which Republicanism spread proves its supernatural origin, "or else its propagation was provided for and carried on by the direct aid of the Divine Being himself." Between these two, Mr. Black may make his choice. He will at once see that the rapid rise and spread of any doctrine does not even tend to show that it was divinely revealed.

This argument is applicable to all religions. Mohammedans can use it as well as Christians. Mohammed was a poor man, a driver of camels. He was without education, without influence and without wealth, and yet in a few years he consoli-

dated thousands of tribes, and made millions of men confess that there is "one God, and Mohammed is his prophet." His success was a thousand times greater during his life than that of Christ. He was not crucified; he was a conqueror. "Of all men, he exercised the greatest influence upon the human race." Never in the world's history did a religion spread with the rapidity of his. It burst like a storm over the fairest portions of the globe. If Mr. Black is right in his position that rapidity is secured only by the direct aid of the Divine Being, then Mohammed was most certainly the prophet of God. As to wars of extermination and slavery, Mohammed agreed with Mr. Black, and upon polygamy, with Jehovah. As to religious toleration, he was great enough to say that "men holding to any form of faith might be saved, provided they were virtuous." In this, he was far in advance both of Jehovah and Mr. Black.

It will not do to take the ground that the rapid rise and spread of a religion demonstrates its divine character. Years before Gautama died, his religion was established, and his disciples were numbered by millions. His doctrines were not enforced by the sword, but by an appeal to the hopes, the fears, and the reason of mankind; and more than one-third of the human race are to-day the followers of Gautama. His religion has outlived all that existed in his time; and according to Dr. Draper, "there is no other country in the world except India that has the religion to-day it had at the birth of Jesus Christ." Gautama believed in the equality of all men; abhorred the spirit of caste, and proclaimed justice, mercy, and education for all.

Imagine a Mohammedan answering an infidel; would he not use the argument of Mr. Black, simply substituting Mohammed for Christ, just as effectually as it has been used against me? There was a time when India was the foremost nation of the world. Would not your argument, Mr. Black, have been just as good in the mouth of a Brahmin then, as it is in yours now? Egypt, the mysterious mother of mankind, with her pyramids built thirty-four hundred years before Christ, was once the first in all the earth, and gave to us our trinity, and our symbol of the cross. Could not a priest of Isis and Osiris have used your arguments to prove that his religion was divine, and could he not have closed by saying: "From the facts established by this evidence it follows irresistibly that our religion came to us from God"? Do you not see that your argument proves too much,

and that it is equally applicable to all the religions of the world?

Again, it is urged that "the acceptance of Christianity by a large portion of the generation contemporary with its founder and his apostles was, under the circumstances, an adjudication as solemn and authoritative as mortal intelligence could pronounce." If this is true, then "the acceptance of Buddhism by a large portion of the generation contemporary with its founder was an adjudication as solemn and authoritative as mortal intelligence could pronounce." The same could be said of Mohammedanism, and, in fact, of every religion that has ever benefited or cursed this world. This argument, when reduced to its simplest form, is this: All that succeeds is inspired.

The old argument that if Christianity is a human fabrication its authors must have been either good men or bad men, takes it for granted that there are but two classes of persons—the good and the bad. There is, at least, one other class—the *mistaken*, and both of the other classes may belong to this. Thousands of most excellent people have been deceived, and the history of the world is filled with instances where men have honestly supposed that they had received communications from angels and gods.

In thousands of instances these pretended communications contained the purest and highest thoughts, together with the most important truths; yet it will not do to say that these accounts are true; neither can they be proved by saying that the men who claimed to be inspired were good. What we must say is, that being good men, they were mistaken; and it is the charitable mantle of a mistake that I throw over Mr. Black, when I find him defending the institution of slavery. He seems to think it utterly incredible that any "combination of knaves, however base, would fraudulently concoct a religious system to denounce themselves, and to invoke the curse of God upon their own conduct." How did religions other than Christianity and Judaism arise? Were they all "concocted by a combination of knaves"? The religion of Gautama is filled with most beautiful and tender thoughts, with most excellent laws, and hundreds of sentences urging mankind to deeds of love and self-denial. Was Gautama inspired?

Does not Mr. Black know that thousands of people charged with witchcraft actually confessed in open court their guilt? Does he not know that they admitted that they had spoken face

to face with Satan, and had sold their souls for gold and power? Does he not know that these admissions were made in the presence and expectation of death? Does he not know that hundreds of judges, some of them as great as the late lamented Gibson, believed in the existence of an impossible crime?

We are told that "there is no good reason to doubt that the statements of the Evangelists, as we have them now, are genuine." The fact is, no one knows who made the "statements of the Evangelists."

There are three important manuscripts upon which the Christian world relies. "The first appeared in the catalogue of the Vatican, in 1475. This contains the Old Testament. Of the New, it contains the four gospels,—the Acts, the seven Catholic Epistles, nine of the Pauline Epistles, and the Epistle to the Hebrews, as far as the fourteenth verse of the ninth chapter,"—and nothing more. This is known as the Codex Vatican. "The second, the Alexandrine, was presented to King Charles the First, in 1628. It contains the Old and New Testaments, with some exceptions; passages are wanting in Matthew, in John, and in II. Corinthians. It also contains the Epistle of Clemens Romanus, a letter of Athanasius, and the treatise of Eusebius on the Psalms." The last is the Sinaitic Codex, discovered about 1850, at the Convent of St. Catherine's, on Mount Sinai. "It contains the Old and New Testaments, and in addition the entire Epistle of Barnabas, and a portion of the Shepherd of Hermas—two books which, up to the beginning of the fourth century, were looked upon by many as Scripture." In this manuscript, or codex, the gospel of St. Mark concludes with the eighth verse of the sixteenth chapter, leaving out the frightful passage: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

In matters of the utmost importance these manuscripts disagree, but even if they all agreed it would not furnish the slightest evidence of their truth. It will not do to call the statements made in the gospels "depositions," until it is absolutely established who made them, and the circumstances under which they were made. Neither can we say that "they were made in the immediate prospect of death," until we know who made them. It is absurd to say that "the witnesses could not have been mistaken, because the nature of the facts precluded the

possibility of any delusion about them." Can it be pretended that the witnesses could not have been mistaken about the relation the Holy Ghost is alleged to have sustained to Jesus Christ? Is there no possibility of delusion about a circumstance of that kind? Did the writers of the four gospels have "the sensible and true avouch of their own eyes' and ears" in that behalf? How was it possible for any one of the four Evangelists to know that Christ was the Son of God, or that he was God? His mother wrote nothing on the subject. Matthew says that an angel of the Lord told Joseph in a dream, but Joseph never wrote an account of this wonderful vision. Luke tells us that the angel had a conversation with Mary, and that Mary told Elizabeth, but Elizabeth never wrote a word. There is no account of Mary, or Joseph, or Elizabeth, or the angel, having had any conversation with Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, in which one word was said about the miraculous origin of Jesus Christ. The persons who knew did not write, so that the account is nothing but hearsay. Does Mr. Black pretend that such statements would be admitted as evidence in any court? But how do we know that the disciples of Christ wrote a word of the gospels? How did it happen that Christ wrote nothing? How do we know that the writers of the gospels "were men of unimpeachable character"?

All this is answered by saying "that nothing was said by the most virulent enemies against the personal honesty of the Evangelists." How is this known? If Christ performed the miracles recorded in the New Testament, why would the Jews put to death a man able to raise their dead? Why should they attempt to kill the Master of Death? How did it happen that a man who had done so many miracles was so obscure, so unknown, that one of his disciples had to be bribed to point him out? Is it not strange that the ones he had cured were not his disciples? Can we believe, upon the testimony of those about whose character we know nothing, that Lazarus was raised from the dead? What became of Lazarus? We never hear of him again. It seems to me that he would have been an object of great interest. People would have said: "He is the man who was once dead." Thousands would have inquired of him about the other world; would have asked him where he was when he received the information that he was wanted on the earth. His experience would have been vastly more interesting than everything else in the New Testament. A returned traveler from the shores of

Eternity—one who had walked twice through the valley of the shadow—would have been the most interesting of human beings. When he came to die again, people would have said: “He is not afraid; he has had experience; he knows what death is.” But, strangely enough, this Lazarus fades into obscurity with “the wise men of the East,” and with the dead who came out of their graves on the night of the crucifixion. How is it known that it was claimed, during the life of Christ, that he had wrought a miracle? And if the claim was made, how is it known that it was not denied? Did the Jews believe that Christ was clothed with miraculous power? Would they have dared to crucify a man who had the power to clothe the dead with life? Is it not wonderful that no one at the trial of Christ said one word about the miracles he had wrought? Nothing about the sick he had healed, nor the dead he had raised?

Is it not wonderful that Josephus, the best historian the Hebrews produced, says nothing about the life or death of Christ; nothing about the massacre of the infants by Herod; not one word about the wonderful star that visited the sky at the birth of Christ; nothing about the darkness that fell upon the world for several hours in the midst of day; and failed entirely to mention that hundreds of graves were opened, and that multitudes of Jews arose from the dead, and visited the Holy City? Is it not wonderful that no historian ever mentioned any of these prodigies? and is it not more amazing than all the rest, that Christ himself concealed from Matthew, Mark, and Luke the dogma of the atonement, the necessity of belief, and the mystery of the second birth?

Of course I know that two letters were said to have been written by Pilate to Tiberius, concerning the execution of Christ, but they have been shown to be forgeries. I also know that “various letters were circulated attributed to Jesus Christ,” and that one letter is said to have been written by him to Abgarus, king of Edessa; but as there was no king of Edessa at that time, this letter is admitted to have been a forgery. I also admit that a correspondence between Seneca and St. Paul was forged.

Here in our own country, only a few years ago, men claimed to have found golden plates upon which was written a revelation from God. They founded a new religion, and, according to their statement, did many miracles. They were treated as outcasts, and their leader was murdered. These men made their “depo-

sitions" "in the immediate prospect of death." They were mobbed, persecuted, derided, and yet they insisted that their prophet had miraculous power, and that he, too, could swing back the hingeless door of death. The followers of these men have increased, in these few years, so that now the murdered prophet has at least two hundred thousand disciples. It will be hard to find a contradiction of these pretended miracles, although this is an age filled with papers, magazines, and books. As a matter of fact, the claims of Joseph Smith were so preposterous that sensible people did not take the pains to write and print denials. When we remember that eighteen hundred years ago there were but few people who could write, and that a manuscript did not become public in any modern sense, it was possible for the gospels to have been written with all the foolish claims in reference to miracles without exciting comment or denial. There is not, in all the contemporaneous literature of the world, a single word about Christ or his apostles. The paragraph in Josephus is admitted to be an interpolation, and the letters, the account of the trial, and several other documents forged by the zeal of the early fathers, are now admitted to be false.

Neither will it do to say that "the statements made by the evangelists are alike upon every important point." If there is anything of importance in the New Testament, from the theological stand-point, it is the ascension of Jesus Christ. If that happened, it was a miracle great enough to surfeit wonder. Are the statements of the inspired witnesses alike on this important point? Let us see.

Matthew says nothing upon the subject. Either Matthew was not there, had never heard of the ascension,—or, having heard of it, did not believe it, or, having seen it, thought it too unimportant to record. To this wonder of wonders Mark devotes one verse: "So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right-hand of God." Can we believe that this verse was written by one who witnessed the ascension of Jesus Christ; by one who watched his Master slowly rising through the air till distance reft him from his tearful sight? Luke, another of the witnesses, says: "And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." John corroborates Matthew, by saying nothing on the subject. Now we find that the last chapter of

Mark, after the eighth verse, is an interpolation; so that Mark really says nothing about the occurrence. Either the ascension of Christ must be given up, or it must be admitted that the witnesses do not agree, and that three of them never heard of that most stupendous event.

Again, if anything could have left its "form and pressure" on the brain, it must have been the last words of Jesus Christ. The last words, according to Matthew, are: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The last words, according to the inspired witness known as Mark, are: "And these signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Luke tells us that the last words uttered by Christ, with the exception of a blessing, were: "And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." The last words, according to John, were: "Peter, seeing Him, saith to Jesus: Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me."

An account of the ascension is also given in the Acts of the Apostles; and the last words of Christ, according to that inspired witness, are: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." In this account of the ascension we find that two men stood by the disciples in white apparel, and asked them: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Matthew says nothing of the two men. Mark never saw them. Luke may have forgotten them when writing his gospel, and John may have regarded them as optical illusions.

Luke testifies that Christ ascended on the very day of his resurrection. John deposes that eight days after the resurrection Christ appeared to the disciples and convinced Thomas. In the

Acts we are told that Christ remained on earth for forty days after his resurrection. These "depositions" do not agree. Neither do Matthew and Luke agree in their histories of the infancy of Christ. It is impossible for both to be true. One of these "witnesses" must have been mistaken.

The most wonderful miracle recorded in the New Testament, as having been wrought by Christ, is the resurrection of Lazarus. While all the writers of the gospels, in many instances, record the same wonders and the same conversations, is it not remarkable that the greatest miracle is mentioned alone by John?

Two of the witnesses, Matthew and Luke, give the genealogy of Christ. Matthew says that there were forty-two generations from Abraham to Christ. Luke insists that there were forty-two from Christ to David, while Matthew gives the number as twenty-eight. It may be said that this is an old objection. An objection remains young until it has been answered. Is it not wonderful that Luke and Matthew do not agree on a single name of Christ's ancestors for thirty-seven generations?

There is a difference of opinion among the "witnesses" as to what the gospel of Christ is. If we take the "depositions" of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, then the gospel of Christ amounts simply to this: That God will forgive the forgiving, and that he will be merciful to the merciful. According to three witnesses, Christ knew nothing of the doctrine of the atonement; never heard of the second birth; and did not base salvation, in whole nor in part, on belief. In the "deposition" of John, we find that we must be born again; that we must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; and that an atonement was made for us. If Christ ever said these things to, or in the hearing of, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, they forgot to mention them.

To my mind, the failure of the evangelists to agree as to what is necessary for man to do in order to insure the salvation of his soul, is a demonstration that they were not inspired.

Neither do the witnesses agree as to the last words of Christ when he was crucified. Matthew says that he cried: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Mark agrees with Matthew. Luke testifies that his last words were: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." John states that he cried: "It is finished."

Luke says that Christ said of his murderers: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Matthew, Mark, and John do not record these touching words. John says that Christ,

on the day of his resurrection, said to his disciples: "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

The other disciples do not record this monstrous passage. They did not hear the abdication of God. They were not present when Christ placed in their hands the keys of heaven and hell, and put a world beneath the feet of priests.

It is easy to account for the differences and contradictions in these "depositions" (and there are hundreds of them) by saying that each one told the story as he remembered it, or as he had heard it, or that the accounts have been changed, but it will not do to say that the witnesses were inspired of God. We can account for these contradictions by the infirmities of human nature; but, as I said before, the infirmities of human nature cannot be predicated of a divine being.

Again, I ask, why should there be more than one inspired gospel? Of what use were the other three? There can be only one true account of anything. All other true accounts must simply be copies of that. And I ask again, why should there have been more than one inspired gospel? That which is the test of truth as to ordinary witnesses is a demonstration against their inspiration. It will not do at this late day to say that the miracles worked by Christ demonstrated his divine origin or mission. The wonderful works he did, did not convince the people with whom he lived. In spite of the miracles, he was crucified. He was charged with blasphemy. "Policemen" denounced the "scurrility" of his words, and the absurdity of his doctrines. He was no doubt told that it was "almost a crime to utter blasphemy in the presence of a Jewish woman"; and it may be that he was taunted for throwing away "the golden metewand" of the "infallible God who authorized slavery in Judea," and taking the "elastic cord of human feeling."

Christians tell us that the citizens of Mecca refused to believe on Mohammed because he was an impostor, and that the citizens of Jerusalem refused to believe on Jesus Christ because he was *not* an impostor.

If Christ had wrought the miracles attributed to him—if he had cured the maimed, the leprous, and the halt—if he had changed the night of blindness into blessed day—if he had wrested from the fleshless hand of avaricious death the stolen jewel of a life, and clothed again with throbbing flesh the pulse-

less dust, he would have won the love and adoration of mankind. If ever there shall stand upon this earth the king of death, all human knees will touch the ground.

We are further informed that "what we call the fundamental truths of Christianity consist of great public events which are sufficiently established by history without special proof."

Of course, we admit that the Roman Empire existed; that Julius Cæsar was assassinated; and we may admit that Rome was founded by Romulus and Remus; but will some one be kind enough to tell us how the assassination of Cæsar even tends to prove that Romulus and Remus were suckled by a wolf? We will all admit that, in the sixth century after Christ, Mohammed was born at Mecca; that his victorious hosts vanquished half the Christian world; that the crescent triumphed over the cross upon a thousand fields; that all the Christians of the earth were not able to rescue from the hands of an impostor the empty grave of Christ. We will all admit that the Mohammedans cultivated the arts and sciences; that they gave us our numerals; taught us the higher mathematics; gave us our first ideas of astronomy, and that "science was thrust into the brain of Europe on the point of a Moorish lance"; and yet we will not admit that Mohammed was divinely inspired, nor that he had frequent conversations with the angel Gabriel, nor that after his death his coffin was suspended in mid-air.

A little while ago, in the city of Chicago, a gentleman addressed a number of Sunday-school children. In his address, he stated that some people were wicked enough to deny the story of the deluge; that he was a traveler; that he had been to the top of Mount Ararat, and had brought with him a stone from that sacred locality. The children were then invited to form in procession and walk by the pulpit, for the purpose of seeing this wonderful stone. After they had looked at it, the lecturer said: "Now, children, if you ever hear anybody deny the story of the deluge, or say that the ark did not rest on Mount Ararat, you can tell them that you know better, because you have seen with your own eyes a stone from that very mountain."

The fact that Christ lived in Palestine does not tend to show that he was in any way related to the Holy Ghost; nor does the existence of the Christian religion substantiate the ascension of Jesus Christ. We all admit that Socrates lived in Athens; but we do not admit that he had a familiar spirit. I am satisfied that John

Wesley was an Englishman, but I hardly believe that God postponed a rain because Mr. Wesley wanted to preach. All the natural things in the world are not sufficient to establish the supernatural. Mr. Black reasons in this way: There was a hydra-headed monster. We know this, because Hercules killed him. There must have been such a woman as Proserpine, otherwise Pluto could not have carried her away. Christ must have been divine, because the Holy Ghost was his father. And there must have been such a being as the Holy Ghost, because without a father Christ could not have existed. Those who are disposed to deny everything because a part is false, reason exactly the other way. They insist that because there was no hydra-headed monster, Hercules did not exist. The true position, in my judgment, is that the natural is not to be discarded because found in the company of the miraculous, neither should the miraculous be believed because associated with the probable. There was in all probability such a man as Jesus Christ. He may have lived in Jerusalem. He may have been crucified, but that he was the Son of God, or that he was raised from the dead, and ascended bodily to Heaven, has never been, and, in the nature of things, can never be, substantiated.

Apparently tired with his efforts to answer what I really said, Mr. Black resorted to the expedient of "compressing" my propositions and putting them in italics. By his system of "compression" he was enabled to squeeze out what I really said, and substitute a few sentences of his own. I did not say that "Christianity offers eternal salvation as the reward of belief alone," but I did say that no salvation is offered *without* belief. There must be a difference of opinion in the minds of Mr. Black's witnesses on this subject. In one place we are told that a man is "justified by faith without the deeds of the law"; and in another, "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness"; and the following passages seem to show the necessity of belief:

"He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die." "For the gifts and calling of God

are without repentance." "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." "Not of works, lest any man should boast." "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." "Whosoever believeth not shall be damned."

I do not understand that the Christians of to-day insist that simple belief will secure the salvation of the soul. I believe it is stated in the Bible that "the very devils believe"; and it would seem from this that belief is not such a meritorious thing, after all. But Christians do insist that without belief no man can be saved; that faith is necessary to salvation, and that there is "none other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved," except that of Christ. My doctrine is that there is only one way to be saved, and that is to act in harmony with your surroundings—to live in accordance with the facts of your being. A Being of infinite wisdom has no right to create a person destined to everlasting pain. For the honest infidel, according to the American Evangelical pulpit, there is no heaven. For the upright atheist, there is nothing in another world but punishment. Mr. Black admits that lunatics and idiots are in no danger of hell. This being so, his God should have created only lunatics and idiots. Why should the fatal gift of brain be given to any human being, if such gift renders him liable to eternal hell? Better be a lunatic here and an angel there. Better be an idiot in this world, if you can be a seraph in the next.

As to the doctrine of the atonement, Mr. Black has nothing to offer except the barren statement that it is believed by the wisest and the best. A Mohammedan, speaking in Constantinople, will say the same of the Koran. A Brahman, in a Hindu temple, will make the same remark, and so will the American Indian, when he endeavors to enforce something upon the young of his tribe. He will say: "The best, the greatest of our tribe have believed in this." This is the argument of the cemetery, the philosophy of epitaphs, the logic of the coffin. Who are the greatest and wisest and most virtuous of mankind? This statement, that it has been believed by the best, is made in connection with an admission that it cannot be fathomed by the wisest. It is not claimed that a thing is necessarily false because it is not understood, but I do claim that it is not necessarily true because it cannot be comprehended. I still insist that "the plan of redemption," as usually preached, is absurd, unjust, and immoral.

For nearly two thousand years Judas Iscariot has been execrated by mankind; and yet, if the doctrine of the atonement is true, upon his treachery hung the plan of salvation. Suppose Judas had known of this plan—known that he was selected by Christ for that very purpose, that Christ was depending on him. And suppose that he also knew that only by betraying Christ could he save either himself or others; what ought Judas to have done? Are you willing to rely upon an argument that justifies the treachery of that wretch?

I insisted upon knowing how the sufferings of an innocent man could satisfy justice for the sins of the guilty. To this, Mr. Black replies as follows: "This raises a metaphysical question, which it is not necessary or possible for me to discuss here." Is this considered an answer? Is it in this way that "my misty creations are made to roll away and vanish into air one after another"? Is this the best that can be done by one of the disciples of the infallible God who butchered babes in Judea? Is it possible for a "policeman" to "silence a rude disturber" in this way? To answer an argument, is it only necessary to say that it "raises a metaphysical question"? Again I say: The life of Christ is worth its example, its moral force, its heroism of benevolence. And again I say: The effort to vindicate a law by inflicting punishment on the innocent is a second violation instead of a vindication.

Mr. Black, under the pretense of "compressing," puts in my mouth the following: "The doctrine of non-resistance, forgiveness of injuries, reconciliation with enemies, as taught in the New Testament, is the child of weakness, degrading and unjust."

This is entirely untrue. What I did say is this: "The idea of non-resistance never occurred to a man who had the power to protect himself. This doctrine was the child of weakness, born when resistance was impossible." I said not one word against the forgiveness of injuries, not one word against the reconciliation of enemies—not one word. I believe in the reconciliation of enemies. I believe in a reasonable forgiveness of injuries. But I do not believe in the doctrine of non-resistance. Mr. Black proceeds to say that Christianity forbids us "to cherish animosity, to thirst for mere revenge, to hoard up wrongs real or fancied, and lie in wait for the chance of paying them back; to be impatient, unforgiving, malicious, and cruel to all who have crossed us." And yet the man who thus describes Christianity tells us

that it is not only our right, but our duty, to fight savages as savages fight us; insists that where a nation tries to exterminate us, we have a right to exterminate them. This same man, who tells us that "the diabolical propensities of the human heart are checked and curbed by the spirit of the Christian religion," and that this religion "has converted men from low savages into refined and civilized beings," still insists that the author of the Christian religion established slavery, waged wars of extermination, abhorred the liberty of thought, and practiced the divine virtues of retaliation and revenge. If it is our duty to forgive our enemies, ought not God to forgive his? Is it possible that God will hate his enemies when he tells us that we must love ours? The enemies of God cannot injure him, but ours can injure us. If it is the duty of the injured to forgive, why should the uninjured insist upon having revenge? Why should a being who destroys nations with pestilence and famine expect that his children will be loving and forgiving?

Mr. Black insists that without a belief in God there can be no perception of right and wrong, and that it is impossible for an atheist to have a conscience. Mr. Black, the Christian, the believer in God, upholds wars of extermination. I denounce such wars as murder. He upholds the institution of slavery. I denounce that institution as the basest of crimes. Yet I am told that I have no knowledge of right and wrong; that I measure with "the elastic cord of human feeling," while the believer in slavery and wars of extermination measures with "the golden metewand of God."

What is right and what is wrong? Everything is right that tends to the happiness of mankind, and everything is wrong that increases the sum of human misery. What can increase the happiness of this world more than to do away with every form of slavery, and with all war? What can increase the misery of mankind more than to increase wars and put chains upon more human limbs? What is conscience? If man were incapable of suffering, if man could not feel pain, the word "conscience" never would have passed his lips. The man who puts himself in the place of another, whose imagination has been cultivated to the point of feeling the agonies suffered by another, is the man of conscience. But a man who justifies slavery, who justifies a God when he commands the soldier to rip open the mother and pierce with the sword of war the child unborn, is

controlled and dominated, not by conscience, but by a cruel and remorseless superstition.

Consequences determine the quality of an action. If consequences are good, so is the action. If actions had no consequences, they would be neither good nor bad. Man did not get his knowledge of the consequences of actions from God, but from experience and reason. If man can, by actual experiment, discover the right and wrong of actions, is it not utterly illogical to declare that they who do not believe in God can have no standard of right and wrong? Consequences are the standard by which actions are judged. They are the children that testify as to the real character of their parents. God or no God, larceny is the enemy of industry—industry is the mother of prosperity—prosperity is a good, and therefore larceny is an evil. God or no God, murder is a crime. There has always been a law against larceny, because the laborer wishes to enjoy the fruit of his toil. As long as men object to being killed, murder will be illegal.

According to Mr. Black, the man who does not believe in a supreme being acknowledges no standard of right and wrong in this world, and therefore can have no theory of rewards and punishments in the next. Is it possible that only those who believe in the God who persecuted for opinion's sake have any standard of right and wrong? Were the greatest men of all antiquity without this standard? In the eyes of intelligent men of Greece and Rome, were all deeds, whether good or evil, morally alike? Is it necessary to believe in the existence of an infinite intelligence before you can have any standard of right and wrong? Is it possible that a being cannot be just or virtuous unless he believes in some being infinitely superior to himself? If this doctrine be true, how can God be just or virtuous? Does he believe in some being superior to himself?

It may be said that the Pagans believed in a god, and consequently had a standard of right and wrong. But the Pagans did not believe in the "true" God. They knew nothing of Jehovah. Of course it will not do to believe in the wrong god. In order to know the difference between right and wrong, you must believe in the right God—in the one who established slavery. Can this be avoided by saying that a false god is better than none?

The idea of justice is not the child of superstition—it was not born of ignorance; neither was it nurtured by the passages in

the Old Testament upholding slavery, wars of extermination, and religious persecution. Every human being necessarily has a standard of right and wrong; and where that standard has not been polluted by superstition, man abhors slavery, regards a war of extermination as murder, and looks upon religious persecution as a hideous crime. If there is a God, infinite in power and wisdom, above him, poised in eternal calm, is the figure of Justice. At the shrine of Justice the infinite God must bow, and in her impartial scales the actions even of Infinity must be weighed. There is no world, no star, no heaven, no hell in which gratitude is not a virtue and where slavery is not a crime.

According to the logic of this "reply," all good and evil become mixed and mingled—equally good and equally bad, unless we believe in the existence of the infallible God who ordered husbands to kill their wives. We do not know right from wrong now, unless we are convinced that a being of infinite mercy waged wars of extermination four thousand years ago. We are incapable even of charity, unless we worship the being who ordered the husband to kill his wife for differing with him on the subject of religion.

We know that acts are good or bad only as they affect the actors, and others. We know that from every good act good consequences flow, and that from every bad act there are only evil results. Every virtuous deed is a star in the moral firmament. There is in the moral world, as in the physical, the absolute and perfect relation of cause and effect. For this reason, the atonement becomes an impossibility. Others may suffer by your crime, but their suffering cannot discharge you; it simply increases your guilt and adds to your burden. For this reason happiness is not a reward—it is a consequence. Suffering is not a punishment—it is a result.

It is insisted that Christianity is not opposed to freedom of thought, but that "it is based on certain principles to which it requires the assent of all." Is this a candid statement? Are we only required to give our assent to certain principles in order to be saved? Are the inspiration of the Bible, the divinity of Christ, the atonement, and the Trinity, principles? Will it be admitted by the orthodox world that good deeds are sufficient unto salvation—that a man can get into heaven by living in accordance with certain principles? This is a most excellent doctrine, but it is not Christianity. And right here, it may be

well enough to state what I mean by Christianity. The morality of the world is not distinctively Christian. Zoroaster, Gautama, Mohammed, Confucius, Christ, and, in fact, all founders of religions, have said to their disciples: You must not steal; You must not murder; You must not bear false witness; You must discharge your obligations. Christianity is the ordinary moral code, *plus* the miraculous origin of Jesus Christ, his crucifixion, his resurrection, his ascension, the inspiration of the Bible, the doctrine of the atonement, and the necessity of belief. Buddhism is the ordinary moral code, *plus* the miraculous illumination of Buddha, the performance of certain ceremonies, a belief in the transmigration of the soul, and in the final absorption of the human by the infinite. The religion of Mohammed is the ordinary moral code, *plus* the belief that Mohammed was the prophet of God, total abstinence from the use of intoxicating drinks, a harem for the faithful here and hereafter, ablutions, prayers, alms, pilgrimages, and fasts.

The morality in Christianity has never opposed the freedom of thought. It has never put, nor tended to put, a chain on a human mind, nor a manacle on a human limb; but the doctrines distinctively Christian—the necessity of believing a certain thing; the idea that eternal punishment awaited him who failed to believe; the idea that the innocent can suffer for the guilty—these things have opposed, and for a thousand years substantially destroyed, the freedom of the human mind. All religions have, with ceremony, magic, and mystery, deformed, darkened, and corrupted the soul. Around the sturdy oaks of morality have grown and clung the parasitic, poisonous vines of the miraculous and monstrous.

I have insisted, and I still insist, that it is impossible for a finite man to commit a crime deserving infinite punishment; and upon this subject Mr. Black admits that “no revelation has lifted the veil between time and eternity”; and, consequently, neither the priest nor the “policeman” knows anything with certainty regarding another world. He simply insists that “in shadowy figures we are warned that a very marked distinction will be made between the good and bad in the next world.” There is “a very marked distinction” in this; but there is this rainbow on the darkest human cloud: The worst have hope of reform. All I insist is, if there is another life, the basest soul that finds its way to that dark or radiant shore will have the

everlasting chance of doing right. Nothing but the most cruel ignorance, the most heartless superstition, the most ignorant theology, ever imagined that the few days of human life spent here, surrounded by mists and clouds of darkness, blown over life's sea by storms and tempests of passion, fixed for all eternity the condition of the human race. If this doctrine be true, this life is but a net, in which Jehovah catches souls for hell.

The idea that a certain belief is necessary to salvation unsheathed the swords and lighted the fagots of persecution. As long as heaven is the reward of creed instead of deed, just so long will every orthodox church be a bastille, every member a prisoner, and every priest a turnkey.

In the estimation of good orthodox Christians, I am a criminal, because I am trying to take from loving mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, and lovers the consolations naturally arising from a belief in an eternity of grief and pain. I want to tear, break, and scatter to the winds the God that priests erected in the fields of innocent pleasure—a God made of sticks, called creeds, and of old clothes, called myths. I have tried to take from the coffin its horror, from the cradle its curse, and put out the fires of revenge kindled by the savages of the past. Is it necessary that heaven should borrow its light from the glare of hell? Infinite punishment is infinite cruelty, endless injustice, immortal meanness. To worship an eternal gaoler hardens, debases, and pollutes the soul. While there is one sad and breaking heart in the universe, no perfectly good being can be perfectly happy. Against the heartlessness of this doctrine every grand and generous soul should enter its solemn protest. I want no part in any heaven where the saved, the ransomed, and redeemed drown with merry shouts the cries and sobs of hell—in which happiness forgets misery—where the tears of the lost increase laughter and deepen the dimples of joy. The idea of hell was born of ignorance, brutality, fear, cowardice, and revenge. This idea tends to show that our remote ancestors were the lowest beasts. Only from dens, lairs, and caves—only from mouths filled with cruel fangs—only from hearts of fear and hatred—only from the conscience of hunger and lust—only from the lowest and most debased, could come this most cruel, heartless, and absurd of all dogmas.

Our ancestors knew but little of nature. They were too astonished to investigate. They could not divest themselves

of the idea that everything happened with reference to them; that they caused storms and earthquakes; that they brought the tempest and the whirlwind; that on account of something they had done, or omitted to do, the lightning of vengeance leaped from the darkened sky. They made up their minds that at least two vast and powerful beings presided over this world; that one was good and the other bad; that both of these beings wished to get control of the souls of men; that they were relentless enemies, eternal foes; that both welcomed recruits and hated deserters; that one offered rewards in this world, and the other in the next. Man saw cruelty and mercy in nature, because he imagined that phenomena were produced to punish or to reward him. It was supposed that God demanded worship; that he loved to be flattered; that he delighted in sacrifice; that nothing made him happier than to see ignorant faith upon its knees; that above all things he hated and despised doubters and heretics, and regarded investigation as rebellion. Each community felt it a duty to see that the enemies of God were converted or killed. To allow a heretic to live in peace was to invite the wrath of God. Every public evil—every misfortune—was accounted for by something the community had permitted or done. When epidemics appeared, brought by ignorance and welcomed by filth, the heretic was brought out and sacrificed to appease the anger of God. By putting intention behind what man called good, God was produced. By putting intention behind what man called bad, the Devil was created. Leave this “intention” out, and gods and devils fade away. If not a human being existed, the sun would continue to shine, and tempest now and then would devastate the earth; the rain would fall in pleasant showers; violets would spread their velvet bosoms to the sun, the earthquake would devour, birds would sing and daisies bloom and roses blush, and volcanoes fill the heavens with their lurid glare; the procession of the seasons would not be broken, and the stars would shine as serenely as though the world were filled with loving hearts and happy homes. Do not imagine that the doctrine of eternal revenge belongs to Christianity alone. Nearly all religions have had this dogma for a corner-stone. Upon this burning foundation nearly all have built. Over the abyss of pain rose the glittering dome of pleasure. This world was regarded as one of trial. Here, a God of infinite wisdom experimented with man. Between the outstretched paws of

the Infinite, the mouse—man—was allowed to play. Here, man had the opportunity of hearing priests and kneeling in temples. Here, he could read, and hear read, the sacred books. Here, he could have the example of the pious and the counsels of the holy. Here, he could build churches and cathedrals. Here, he could burn incense, fast, wear hair-cloth, deny himself all the pleasures of life, confess to priests, construct instruments of torture, bow before pictures and images, and persecute all who had the courage to despise superstition, and the goodness to tell their honest thoughts. After death, if he died out of the church, nothing could be done to make him better. When he should come into the presence of God, nothing was left except to damn him. Priests might convert him here, but God could do nothing there. All of which shows how much more a priest can do for a soul than its creator. Only here, on the earth, where the devil is constantly active, only where his agents attack every soul, is there the slightest hope of moral improvement. Strange! that a world cursed by God, filled with temptations, and thick with fiends, should be the only place where man can repent, the only place where reform is possible!

Masters frightened slaves with the threat of hell, and slaves got a kind of shadowy revenge by whispering back the threat. The imprisoned imagined a hell for their gaolers; the weak built this place for the strong; the arrogant for their rivals; the vanquished for their victors; the priest for the thinker; religion for reason; superstition for science. All the meanness, all the revenge, all the selfishness, all the cruelty, all the hatred, all the infamy of which the heart of man is capable, grew, blossomed, and bore fruit in this one word—Hell. For the nourishment of this dogma, cruelty was soil, ignorance was rain, and fear was light.

Why did Mr. Black fail to answer what I said in relation to the doctrine of inspiration? Did he consider that a “metaphysical question”? Let us see what inspiration really is. A man looks at the sea, and the sea says something to him. It makes an impression on his mind. It awakens memory, and this impression depends upon his experience—upon his intellectual capacity. Another looks upon the same sea. He has a different brain; he has a different experience. The sea may speak to him of joy, to the other of grief and tears. The sea cannot tell the same thing to any two human beings, because no two human beings have had

the same experience. One may think of wreck and ruin, and another, while listening to the "multitudinous laughter of the sea," may say: Every drop has visited all the shores of earth; every one has been frozen in the vast and icy North, has fallen in snow, has whirled in storms around the mountain peaks, been kissed to vapor by the sun, worn the seven-hued robe of light, fallen in pleasant rain, gurgled from springs, and laughed in brooks while lovers wooed upon the banks. Everything in nature tells a different story to all eyes that see and to all ears that hear. So, when we look upon a flower, a painting, a statue, a star, or a violet, the more we know, the more we have experienced, the more we have thought, the more we remember, the more the statue, the star, the painting, the violet has to tell. Nature says to me all that I am capable of understanding—gives all that I can receive. As with star, or flower, or sea, so with a book. A thoughtful man reads Shakespeare. What does he get? All that he has the mind to understand. Let another read him, who knows nothing of the drama, nothing of the impersonations of passion, and what does he get? Almost nothing. Shakespeare has a different story for each reader. He is a world in which each recognizes his acquaintances. The impression that nature makes upon the mind, the stories told by sea and star and flower, must be the natural food of thought. Leaving out for the moment the impressions gained from ancestors, the hereditary fears and drifts and trends—the natural food of thought must be the impressions made upon the brain by coming in contact through the medium of the senses with what we call the outward world. The brain is natural; its food is natural; the result, thought, must be natural. Of the supernatural we have no conception. Thought may be deformed, and the thought of one may be strange to, and denominated unnatural by, another; but it cannot be supernatural. It may be weak, it may be insane, but it is not supernatural. Above the natural, man cannot rise. There can be deformed ideas, as there are deformed persons. There may be religions monstrous and misshapen, but they were naturally produced. The world is to each man according to each man. It takes the world as it really is and that man to make that man's world.

You may ask, And what of all this? I reply, As with everything in nature, so with the Bible. It has a different story for each reader. Is, then, the Bible a different book to every human

being who reads it? It is. Can God, through the Bible, make precisely the same revelation to two persons? He cannot. Why? Because the man who reads is not inspired. God should inspire readers as well as writers.

You may reply: God knew that his book would be understood differently by each one, and intended that it should be understood as it is understood by each. If this is so, then my understanding of the Bible is the real revelation to me. If this is so, I have no right to take the understanding of another. I must take the revelation made to me through my understanding, and by that revelation I must stand. Suppose, then, that I read this Bible honestly, fairly, and when I get through am compelled to say, "The book is not true." If this is the honest result, then you are compelled to say, either that God has made no revelation to me, or that the revelation that it is not true is the revelation made to me, and by which I am bound. If the book and my brain are both the work of the same infinite God, whose fault is it that the book and brain do not agree? Either God should have written a book to fit my brain, or should have made my brain to fit his book. The inspiration of the Bible depends upon the credulity of him who reads. There was a time when its geology, its astronomy, its natural history, were thought to be inspired: that time has passed. There was a time when its morality satisfied the men who ruled the world of thought: that time has passed.

Mr. Black, continuing his process of compressing my propositions, attributes to me the following statement: "The gospel of Christ does not satisfy the hunger of the heart." I did not say this. What I did say is: "The dogmas of the past no longer reach the level of the highest thought, nor satisfy the hunger of the heart." In so far as Christ taught any doctrine in opposition to slavery, in favor of intellectual liberty, upholding kindness, enforcing the practice of justice and mercy, I most cheerfully admit that his teachings should be followed. Such teachings do not need the assistance of miracles. They are not in the region of the supernatural. They find their evidence in the glad response of every honest heart that superstition has not touched and stained. The great question under discussion is, whether the immoral, absurd, and infamous can be established by the miraculous. It cannot be too often repeated, that truth scorns the assistance of miracle. That which actually happens

sets in motion innumerable effects, which, in turn, become causes producing other effects. These are all "witnesses" whose "depositions" continue. What I insist on is, that a miracle cannot be established by human testimony. We have known people to be mistaken. We know that all people will not tell the truth. We have never seen the dead raised. When people assert that they have, we are forced to weigh the probabilities, and the probabilities are on the other side. It will not do to assert that the universe was created, and then say that such creation was miraculous, and, therefore, all miracles are possible. We must be sure of our premises. Who knows that the universe was created? If it was not; if it has existed from eternity; if the present is the necessary child of all the past, then the miraculous is the impossible. Throw away all the miracles of the New Testament, and the good teachings of Christ remain—all that is worth preserving will be there still. Take from what is now known as Christianity the doctrine of the atonement, the fearful dogma of eternal punishment, the absurd idea that a certain belief is necessary to salvation, and with most of the remainder the good and intelligent will most heartily agree.

Mr. Black attributes to me the following expression: "Christianity is pernicious in its moral effect, darkens the mind, narrows the soul, arrests the progress of human society, and hinders civilization." I said no such thing. Strange, that he is only able to answer what I did not say. I endeavored to show that the passages in the Old Testament upholding slavery, polygamy, wars of extermination, and religious intolerance had filled the world with blood and crime. I admitted that there are many wise and good things in the Old Testament. I also insisted that the doctrine of the atonement—that is to say, of moral bankruptcy—the idea that a certain belief is necessary to salvation, and the frightful dogma of eternal pain, had narrowed the soul, had darkened the mind, and had arrested the progress of human society. Like other religions, Christianity is a mixture of good and evil. The church has made more orphans than it has fed. It has never built asylums enough to hold the insane of its own making. It has shed more blood than light.

Mr. Black seems to think that miracles are the most natural things imaginable, and wonders that anybody should be insane enough to deny the probability of the impossible. He regards all who doubt the miraculous origin, the resurrection and ascension

of Jesus Christ, as afflicted with some "error of the moon," and declares that their "disbelief seems like a kind of insanity."

To ask for evidence is not generally regarded as a symptom of a brain diseased. Delusions, illusions, phantoms, hallucinations, apparitions, chimeras, and visions are the common property of the religious and the insane. Persons blessed with sound minds and healthy bodies rely on facts, not fancies—on demonstrations, instead of dreams. It seems to me that the most orthodox Christians must admit that many of the miracles recorded in the New Testament are extremely childish. They must see that the miraculous draught of fishes, changing water into wine, fasting for forty days, inducing devils to leave an insane man by allowing them to take possession of swine, walking on the water, and using a fish for a pocket-book, are all unworthy of an infinite being, and are calculated to provoke laughter—to feed suspicion and engender doubt.

Mr. Black takes the ground that if a man believes in the creation of the universe—that being the most stupendous miracle of which the mind can conceive—he has no right to deny anything. He asserts that God created the universe; that creation was a miracle; that "God would be likely to reveal his will to the rational creatures who were required to obey it," and that he would authenticate his revelation by giving his prophets and apostles supernatural power.

After making these assertions, he triumphantly exclaims: "It therefore follows that the improbability of a miracle is no greater than the original improbability of a revelation, and that is not improbable at all."

How does he know that God made the universe? How does he know what God would be likely to do? How does he know that any revelation was made? And how did he ascertain that any of the apostles and prophets were intrusted with supernatural power? It will not do to prove your premises by assertions, and then claim that your conclusions are correct, because they agree with your premises.

If "God would be likely to reveal his will to the rational creatures who were required to obey it," why did he reveal it only to the Jews? According to Mr. Black, God is the only natural thing in the universe.

We should remember that ignorance is the mother of credulity; that the early Christians believed everything but the

truth, and that they accepted Paganism, admitted the reality of all the Pagan miracles—taking the ground that they were all forerunners of their own. Pagan miracles were never denied by the Christian world until late in the seventeenth century. Voltaire was the third man of note in Europe who denied the truth of Greek and Roman mythology. “The early Christians cited Pagan oracles predicting in detail the sufferings of Christ. They forged prophecies, and attributed them to the heathen sibyls, and they were accepted as genuine by the entire church.”

St. Irenæus assures us that all Christians possessed the power of working miracles ; that they prophesied, cast out devils, healed the sick, and even raised the dead. St. Epiphanius asserts that some rivers and fountains were annually transmuted into wine, in attestation of the miracle of Cana, adding that he himself had drunk of these fountains. St. Augustine declares that one was told in a dream where the bones of St. Stephen were buried, that the bones were thus discovered, and brought to Hippo, and that they raised five dead persons to life, and that in two years seventy miracles were performed with these relics. Justin Martyr states that God once sent some angels to guard the human race, that these angels fell in love with the daughters of men, and became the fathers of innumerable devils.

For hundreds of years, miracles were about the only things that happened. They were wrought by thousands of Christians, and testified to by millions. The saints and martyrs, the best and greatest, were the witnesses and workers of wonders. Even heretics, with the assistance of the devil, could suspend the “laws of nature.” Must we believe these wonderful accounts because they were written by “good men,” by Christians, “who made their statements in the presence and expectation of death”? The truth is that these “good men” were mistaken. They expected the miraculous. They breathed the air of the marvelous. They fed their minds on prodigies, and their imaginations feasted on effects without causes. They were incapable of investigating. Doubts were regarded as “rude disturbers of the congregation.” Credulity and sanctity walked hand in hand. Reason was danger. Belief was safety. As the philosophy of the ancients was rendered almost worthless by the credulity of the common people, so the proverbs of Christ, his religion of forgiveness, his creed of kindness, were lost in the mist of miracle and the darkness of superstition.

If Mr. Black is right, there were no virtue, justice, intellectual liberty, moral elevation, refinement, benevolence, or true wisdom, until Christianity was established. He asserts that when Christ came, "benevolence, in any shape, was altogether unknown."

He insists that "the infallible God who authorized slavery in Judea" established a government; that he was the head and king of the Jewish people; that for this reason heresy was treason. Is it possible that God established a government in which benevolence was unknown? How did it happen that he established no asylums for the insane? How do you account for the fact that your God permitted some of his children to become insane? Why did Jehovah fail to establish hospitals and schools? Is it reasonable to believe that a good God would assist his chosen people to exterminate or enslave his other children? Why would your God people a world, knowing that it would be destitute of benevolence for four thousand years? Jehovah should have sent missionaries to the heathen. He ought to have reformed the inhabitants of Canaan. He should have sent teachers, not soldiers—missionaries, not murderers. A God should not exterminate his children; he should reform them.

Mr. Black gives us a terrible picture of the condition of the world at the coming of Christ; but did the God of Judea treat his own children, the Gentiles, better than the Pagans treated theirs? When Rome enslaved mankind—when with her victorious armies she sought to conquer or to exterminate tribes and nations, she but followed the example of Jehovah. Is it true that benevolence came with Christ, and that his coming heralded the birth of pity in the human heart? Does not Mr. Black know that, thousands of years before Christ was born, there were hospitals and asylums for orphans in China? Does he not know that in Egypt, before Moses lived, the insane were treated with kindness and wooed back to natural thought by music's golden voice? Does he not know that in all times, and in all countries, there have been great and loving souls who wrought, and toiled, and suffered, and died that others might enjoy? Is it possible that he knows nothing of the religion of Buddha—a religion based upon equality, charity, and forgiveness? Does he not know that, centuries before the birth of the great Peasant of Palestine, another, upon the plains of India, had taught the doctrine of forgiveness; and that, contrary to the tyranny of Jehovah, had given birth to the sublime declaration that all men are by nature free

and equal? Does he not know that a religion of absolute trust in God had been taught thousands of years before Jerusalem was built—a religion based upon absolute special Providence, carrying its confidence to the extremest edge of human thought, declaring that every evil is a blessing in disguise, and that every step taken by mortal man, whether in the rags of poverty or the royal robes of kings, is the step necessary to be taken by that soul in order to reach perfection and eternal joy? But how is it possible for a man who believes in slavery to have the slightest conception of benevolence, justice, or charity? If Mr. Black is right, even Christ believed and taught that man could buy and sell his fellow-man. Will the Christians of America admit this? Do they believe that Christ from heaven's throne mocked when colored mothers, reft of babes, knelt by empty cradles and besought his aid?

For the man Christ—for the reformer who loved his fellow-men—for the man who believed in an Infinite Father, who would shield the innocent and protect the just—for the martyr who expected to be rescued from the cruel cross, and who at last, finding that his hope was dust, cried out in the gathering gloom of death: "My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?"—for that great and suffering man, mistaken though he was, I have the highest admiration and respect. That man did not, as I believe, claim a miraculous origin; he did not pretend to heal the sick nor raise the dead. He claimed simply to be a man, and taught his fellow-men that love is stronger far than hate. His life was written by reverent ignorance. Loving credulity belittled his career with feats of jugglery and magic art, and priests, wishing to persecute and slay, put in his mouth the words of hatred and revenge. The theological Christ is the impossible union of the human and divine—man with the attributes of God, and God with the limitations and weaknesses of man.

After giving a terrible description of the Pagan world, Mr. Black says: "The church came, and her light penetrated the moral darkness like a new sun; she covered the globe with institutions of mercy."

Is this true? Do we not know that when the Roman empire fell, darkness settled on the world? Do we not know that this darkness lasted for a thousand years, and that during all that time the church of Christ held, with bloody hands, the sword of power? These years were the starless midnight of our race. Art

died, law was forgotten, toleration ceased to exist, charity fled from the human breast, and justice was unknown. Kings were tyrants, priests were pitiless, and the poor multitude were slaves. In the name of Christ, men made instruments of torture, and the *auto da fé* took the place of the gladiatorial show. Liberty was in chains, honesty in dungeons, while Christian superstition ruled mankind. Christianity compromised with Paganism. The statues of Jupiter were used to represent Jehovah. Isis and her babe were changed to Mary and the infant Christ. The Trinity of Egypt became the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The simplicity of the early Christians was lost in heathen rites and Pagan pomp. The believers in the blessedness of poverty became rich, avaricious, and grasping, and those who had said, "Sell all, and give to the poor," became the ruthless gatherers of tithes and taxes. In a few years the teachings of Jesus were forgotten. The gospels were interpolated by the designing and ambitious. The church was infinitely corrupt. Crime was crowned, and virtue scourged. The minds of men were saturated with superstition. Miracles, apparitions, angels, and devils had possession of the world. "The nights were filled with incubi and succubi; devils, clad in wondrous forms, and imps in hideous shapes, sought to tempt or fright the soldiers of the cross. The maddened spirits of the air sent hail and storm. Sorcerers wrought sudden death, and witches worked with spell and charm against the common weal." In every town the stake arose. Faith carried fagots to the feet of philosophy. Priests—not "politicians"—fed and fanned the eager flames. The dungeon was the foundation of the cathedral. Priests sold charms and relics to their flocks to keep away the wolves of hell. Thousands of Christians, failing to find protection in the church, sold their poor souls to Satan for some magic wand. Suspicion sat in every house, families were divided, wives denounced husbands, husbands denounced wives, and children their parents. Every calamity then, as now, increased the power of the church. Pestilence supported the pulpit, and famine was the right hand of faith. Christendom was insane.

Will Mr. Black be kind enough to state at what time "the church covered the globe with institutions of mercy"? In his reply, he conveys the impression that these institutions were organized in the first century, or at least in the morning of Christianity. How many hospitals for the sick were established by the church during a thousand years? Do we not know that for hun-

dreds of years the Mohammedans erected more hospitals and asylums than the Christians ! Christendom was filled with racks and thumb-screws, with stakes and fagots, with chains and dungeons, for centuries before a hospital was built. Priests despised doctors. Prayer was medicine. Physicians interfered with the sale of charms and relics. The church did not cure—it killed. It practiced surgery with the sword. The early Christians did not build asylums for the insane. They charged them with witchcraft, and burnt them. They built asylums, not for the mentally diseased, but for the mentally developed. These asylums were graves.

All the languages of the world have not words of horror enough to paint the agonies of man when the church had power. Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Domitian, and Commodus were not as cruel, false, and base as many of the Christian Popes. Opposite the names of these imperial criminals write John the XII., Leo the VIII., Boniface the VII., Benedict the IX., Innocent the III., and Alexander the VI. Was it under these pontiffs that the “church penetrated the moral darkness like a new sun,” and covered the globe with institutions of mercy? Rome was far better when Pagan than when Catholic. It was better to allow gladiators and criminals to fight than to burn honest men. The greatest of the Romans denounced the cruelties of the arena. Seneca condemned the combats even of wild beasts. He was tender enough to say that “we should have a bond of sympathy for all sentient beings, knowing that only the depraved and base take pleasure in the sight of blood and suffering.” Aurelius compelled the gladiators to fight with blunted swords. Roman lawyers declared that all men are by nature free and equal. Woman, under Pagan rule in Rome, became as free as man. Zeno, long before the birth of Christ, taught that virtue alone establishes a difference between men. We know that the CIVIL LAW is the foundation of our codes. We know that fragments of Greek and Roman art—a few manuscripts saved from Christian destruction, some inventions and discoveries of the Moors—were the seeds of modern civilization. Christianity, for a thousand years, taught memory to forget and reason to believe. Not one step was taken in advance. Over the manuscripts of philosophers and poets, priests, with their ignorant tongues thrust out, devoutly scrawled the forgeries of faith. For a thousand years the torch of progress was extinguished in the blood of Christ, and his disciples, moved by ignorant zeal, by

insane, cruel creeds, destroyed with flame and sword a hundred millions of their fellow-men. They made this world a hell. But if cathedrals had been universities—if dungeons of the Inquisition had been laboratories—if Christians had believed in character instead of creed—if they had taken from the Bible all the good and thrown away the wicked and absurd—if domes of temples had been observatories—if priests had been philosophers—if missionaries had taught the useful arts—if astrology had been astronomy—if the black art had been chemistry—if superstition had been science—if religion had been humanity—it would have been a heaven filled with love, with liberty, and joy.

We did not get our freedom from the church. The great truth, that all men are by nature free, was never told on Sinai's barren crags, nor by the lonely shores of Galilee.

The Old Testament filled this world with tyranny and crime, and the New gives us a future filled with pain for nearly all the sons of men. The Old describes the hell of the past, and the New the hell of the future. The Old tells us the frightful things that God has done—the New the cruel things that he will do. These two books give us the sufferings of the past and future—the injustice, the agony, and tears of both worlds. If the Bible is true—if Jehovah is God—if the lot of countless millions is to be eternal pain—better a thousand times that all the constellations of the shoreless vast were eyeless darkness and eternal space. Better that all that is should cease to be. Better that all the seeds and springs of things should fail and wither from great Nature's realm. Better that causes and effects should lose relation and become unmeaning phrases and forgotten sounds. Better that every life should change to breathless death, to voiceless blank, and every world to blind oblivion and to moveless naught.

Mr. Black justifies all the crimes and horrors, excuses all the tortures of all the Christian years, by denouncing the cruelties of the French Revolution. Thinking people will not hasten to admit that an infinitely good being authorized slavery in Judea, because of the atrocities of the French Revolution. They will remember the sufferings of the Huguenots. They will remember the massacre of St. Bartholomew. They will not forget the countless cruelties of priest and king. They will not forget the dungeons of the Bastille. They will know that the Revolution was an effect, and that liberty was not the cause—that atheism

was not the cause. Behind the Revolution they will see altar and throne—sword and fagot—palace and cathedral—king and priest—master and slave—tyrant and hypocrite. They will see that the excesses, the cruelties, and crimes were but the natural fruit of seeds the church had sown. But the Revolution was not entirely evil. Upon that cloud of war, black with the myriad miseries of a thousand years, dabbled with blood of king and queen, of patriot and priest, there was this bow: "Beneath the flag of France all men are free." In spite of all the blood and crime, in spite of deeds that seem insanely base, the People placed upon a Nation's brow these stars:—Liberty, Fraternity, Equality—grander words than ever issued from Jehovah's lips.

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.